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by Conor Cruise O'Brien

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

U.S. AGRICULTURE

Gregg Easterbrook ("Making Sense of Agriculture," July *Atlantic*) says, after visiting twenty-four Iowa farms, that "the people on these farms did not live in poverty." In fact U.S. Department of Agriculture statistics show that the average Iowa farmer recorded a net income *loss* of \$1,891 during 1983. The average net farm income for all fifty states dropped to \$6,793 during the same year, which represents an income \$3,407 below the federally established poverty level for a family of four. There is poverty in the heartland.

And although Easterbrook tries to dispel common misconceptions surrounding American agriculture, he repeats one of the most common myths of all: that there are too many farmers. Easterbrook correctly lists overproduction as one of several problems troubling agriculture, but the assumption that the problem of overproduction can somehow be corrected by reducing the number of farmers is faulty and misleading. Indeed, the past thirty years has demonstrated an inverse relationship between the number of farmers and agricultural production.

Easterbrook claims that Reagan's proposed farm bill "is the only one to concentrate on the problem of overproduction." The opposite is actually true. The problem of overproduction will be solved by reducing the number of acres tilled, not by reducing the number of farmers. Agricultural economists project that production levels of major commodities would increase under Reagan's plan, as farmers strove to produce more in order to compensate for the lower prices that Under-Secretary of International Affairs and Commodity Programs Daniel Amstutz recently warned farmers to expect.

For readers sincerely interested in solving the problem of overproduction and in the future of American agriculture, I suggest for consideration the Farm Policy Reform Act of 1985, currently sponsored by Iowa Senator Tom Harkin and a host of rural and urban legislators. This bill offers farmers a referendum on a mandatory supply-management program that, if implemented, would reduce production of most commodities currently covered by federal support programs, including corn,

wheat, barley, cotton, oats, rice, and soybeans.

The primary criticism of this proposal is that commodity prices will rise and consequently U.S. exports will decrease. However, reduction in production is projected to keep commodity prices—and farm income—high enough to withstand a decrease in exports. In any event, exports are only one factor in the farm-income equation, and high levels of exports do not guarantee correspondingly high levels of agricultural income. That's just another of those misconceptions.

DENNIS HARBAUGH
Des Moines, Iowa

Gregg Easterbrook's article on agriculture is the most lucid, well-balanced account of American farm programs I have read since their inception, more than fifty years ago. But he leaves out horror stories that, when they are fully understood by the taxpayer/consumer, threaten even a worthwhile USDA undertaking like agricultural-research-and-development assistance to less fortunate nations.

One such abuse is lending by the Rural Electrification Administration at absurdly low interest rates, some as low as four percent, for periods as long as forty years, to provide electricity and telephone service to the "impoverished" citizens of such posh areas as Hilton Head Island and Kiawah Island, South Carolina. Then there are loan guarantees by the Farmers Home Administration for such "industrial" undertakings as the construction of a waterslide to replace the agricultural employment that may have disappeared from now \$1-million-an-acre ocean-oriented land.

A more serious, financially debilitating affront to the American consumer is the sugar-price-support program, which currently forces him to shell out seven times the world price for that commodity to continue a high-cost and economically unjustifiable domestic beet- and cane-sugar industry. This program, in turn, has spawned a corn-sweetener industry, which is almost as costly as but politically more potent than the sugar industry itself. Each excess cent paid by consumers, household and industrial (bottlers, bakers, candy manufacturers,

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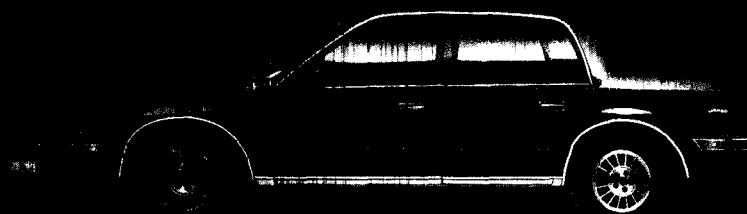
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and so forth), costs \$300 million annually. At present this bill totals \$5 billion a year.

JOSEPH T. ELVOE
Charleston, S.C.

Gregg Easterbrook's article in the July *Atlantic* reveals that he fell for some of the myths he tries to debunk. He writes of "honest folk . . . working the earth" and says, "To be true capitalists farmers would have to view their neighbors as arch enemies." He writes further of the "communal quality of rural America" and the "spiritual example" set by farm living.

I have farmed for ten years after moving from an urban, intellectual environment, and I have gradually come to understand the essential characteristics of life in a farming community—conformism, pretense, and personal insecurity. I don't say this out of bitterness or unhappiness, for I expected no more when I moved here, and have no intention of leaving the useful and productive life my wife and I have made for ourselves here.

Rural people make a pretense of morality by attending church up to several times a week. They make a pretense of supporting education, but what they want is athletics and conformity, from students and teachers both. They make a pretense of honesty, yet they use illegal medications on animals destined for use as human food. The whole 4H Club system preaches the merit of hard work and honesty yet teaches the use of trickery in the animal-show ring to win ribbons and cash, and fudging in records to make projects look good.

There is a pretense of community and neighborliness, yet farmers seem incapable of marketing cooperatively. They have a macho need to beat their neighbors, so cooperation isn't possible, because then they'd all be the same. There is pretense in the way farmers always talk about their gross receipts rather than their net profit. They want to brag at the elevator or the café that their hogs "topped the market" in terms of gross sale price. I've worked with sheep raisers who didn't sell lambs through our marketing co-op because our gross was sometimes less than a high figure listed in a newspaper, even though our costs are so much less that the net is lots better. It's not that they lie about the price they receive—they just choose a route that lets them brag and feel important, even if they get less money in the end.

This all comes from the deep insecurity of farmers. They feel inferior to city people, to educated people, to salesmen, to bankers, to extension agents, to schoolteachers, to practically everybody. This insecurity comes out as hostility to government at all levels. It shows in their feelings of inability to affect their own fate in a world full of sharpies.

RONALD B. PARKER
Henning, Minn.

While Gregg Easterbrook may have provided some valuable perspective on farm issues, his conclusion is a non sequitur.

It is common sense, and abundantly clear from his accounts, that when farmers go out of business, the land usually remains in production in the hands of others.

Thus, the only solutions remain production controls or increased consumption (probably by subsidizing exports) or some combination. Cutting subsidies is not a solution if farmer response continues to be what it has been: plant more.

PHILIP D. ROOS
Cabool, Mo.

Gregg Easterbrook's article illuminates many of the economic and political forces at work in the farm problem, but it needs a more exact analysis of farm economics and trends and a wider look at domestic and foreign policies in regard to farm surpluses and shortages.

In the first two pages of his article Easterbrook cites various trend data to argue that most American farmers are not doing badly and do not get subsidies. But most of his data are per family, not per capita. And they are selected from a few months in 1983 and 1984 or are presented in absolute numbers for comparison with past decades, when different conditions prevailed, or are placed in misleading comparisons (for example, a farm "profit" rate of 2.4 percent in the low-profit years of 1983–1984). Even weaker is his argument that most farmers do not benefit from farm subsidies: he cites their low participation in direct "deficiency" programs but ignores the indirect effect of subsidies that raise or uphold crop prices at a level benefiting every farmer.

In contrast to the first two pages, the rest of the article tends to show that American farmers are very bad off indeed, and are going from bad to worse.

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Economy	.79	6pm-7am
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Easterbrook himself shows how in the past decade the federal government's "deficiency payments" and "crop loans" have supported overproduction, while overeager bankers have virtually pushed loan funds into the hands of farmers to buy much more land, fertilizers, and equipment at high interest rates—the result being the spread of farm bankruptcies as the world surplus and low crop prices emerged in the 1980s.

Looking to the future, Easterbrook slides rather lightly over the trends, especially in the less-developed countries, that are projecting ever-increasing food surpluses on world markets. There is not only the gradual diffusion of the Green Revolution—which of course began long before the U.S. dollar became overvalued in the 1980s—but also the sharp change of food-pricing policy in many less-developed countries, where urban food prices had been kept too low to be remunerative to native farmers but have now been lifted to stimulatory levels. Only a few special cases, mostly in Africa, still have severe food shortages.

Indeed, in the broadest perspective it is a whole set of backward-facing policies, in the United States and abroad, that must bear much responsibility for the problems of our farm surpluses, no less than for our surpluses of factory capacity, mining and transport facilities, and their corresponding work forces. Attempting to sustain all these groups in their present and accustomed occupations, we have granted protection against imports, and subsidies for high-cost operations, and inadequate disposal, including gifts, of carryovers. These policies prevent mobility of firms and workers of all kinds and prevent their reallocation out of the declining fields and into new developing sectors.

Not all of them can move as readily as the farm family that Easterbrook cites at the end of his article ("young, responsible, bright, and eager to work"). For all the ones who are not so mobile, national programs of retraining and resettlement—to be evolved in part from the existing Trade Adjustment Act provisions—are urgently needed to ease the transition.

EDWIN P. REUBENS
*Professor of Economics, Emeritus
City College of New York
New York, N.Y.*

Gregg Easterbrook suggests that farming is not a bad investment and

that farmers make good money. His figures don't tell the real truth, because the farmers now receiving a high income have a large investment with a low debt load and the return on this investment in agricultural land is part of the reported income. This return on agricultural property has been caused by inflation's increasing land values, a return which is really of little benefit if you do not wish to sell your property. Easterbrook points out that farmers are emotionally attached to their property but dismisses this as not significant. I wonder if his attitude would be the same if he lived in a house his great-great-great-grandfather built. He points out that farmers "cried wolf" this spring and that even though President Reagan vetoed the emergency farm bill very few farmers folded. The President may have vetoed the bill, but then, to prevent disaster, money beyond what was promised from other government sources was pumped into agriculture.

Easterbrook suggests that President Reagan's plan to put agriculture completely on its own is probably the best course of action. This would be like kicking a man who is down. For one thing, President Reagan's plan will pit an American farm in an open market against subsidized foreign farms. A shock wave would flow through agriculture and rural America. The weaker farms would go first; healthier farms would follow. In the end most of the agricultural resources would wind up belonging to big corporations. The consumer would have to pay more for food. Rural communities dependent on local farms for their existence would become ghost towns. The corporations would raise the food from which they could profit the most. We could even become a nation dependent on foreign food sources.

There are alternatives. The dairy industry just finished a very successful experiment with a diversion program that reduced milk surpluses and saved taxpayers billions of dollars. The diversion program assessed (taxed) all dairy farmers and then used the revenues to pay those farmers who could and would reduce their proven capacity to produce. It was a supply-control program in which each farmer shared the cost. The National Milk Producers Federation, which represents about 80 percent of milk producers in the country, wants the diversion program reinstated. I think this approach deserves support and could also

be implemented in other commodities with a surplus problem.

TIM A. CARTER
Bethel, Maine

Gregg Easterbrook concludes his "revisionist view of farm policy" with the observation that "Congress will have to face the fact that there are too many farmers." He endorses the Reagan Administration's free-market approach of eliminating farm subsidies for the least successful farmers while recognizing "the painful human cost" that would result. There is a major problem, however, in Easterbrook's assumption that forcing marginal farmers out of business will solve the problem of overproduction. After foreclosure an Iowa family farm continues to grow corn, but it does so for the profit of new owners—usually corporations or wealthy investors. Reduction of total acreage in production, not in the number of farmers, is the key to reducing overproduction.

The Farm Policy Reform Act of 1985 would reduce total acreage in production by establishing a conservation reserve for highly erodible farmland. This program, of course, is not a panacea, but it addresses the problem of overproduction more correctly than free-market approaches.

JEFFREY OSTLER
Iowa City, Iowa

The trouble with agriculture is that we are trying to impose inadequate economic-decision-making criteria on a biological system.

Much of the California paradise Easterbrook describes is actually a desert, made to bloom only by enormous infusions of federal subsidies to supply irrigation water. The vegetable farms there are diversified only in the economic sense. Biologically they are unstable monocultures propped up by costly inputs of agricultural chemicals. The harsh Iowa landscape is actually some of the most productive and fertile cropland in the world, even though economics are driving us to send two bushels of Iowa topsoil down the Mississippi for every bushel of Iowa corn we harvest.

The loss of soil is analogous to our crumbling industrial infrastructure. Soil is our capital, our resource base, which supports current income and ensures future production. But unlike a factory, soil, given proper care, can be not only maintained but improved in fertility and in ability to produce food. Soil erosion

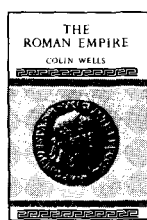
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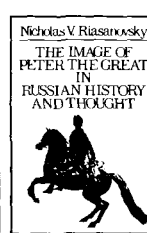
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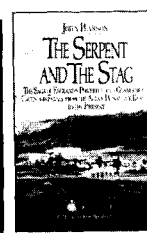
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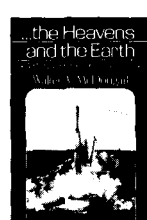
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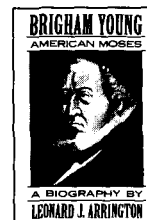
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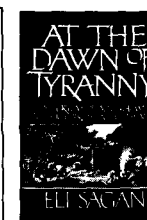
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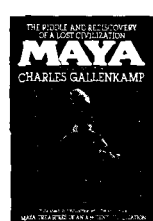
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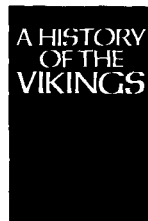
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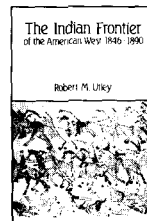
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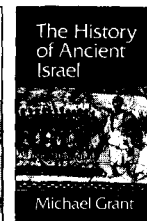
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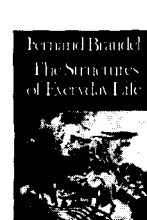
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causes billions of dollars of damage annually by clogging waterways and decreasing the quality of drinking water. But, according to an Iowa State University study, erosion costs the farmer only \$1.60 to \$2 per acre—less than the price of a bushel of corn even in today's depressed market. Although it is clearly in our national interest to reduce erosion in both the short and the long run, we don't have an economic system that takes these externalized costs into account.

CRAIG CRAMER
Fleetwood, Pa.

Easterbrook correctly states that Americans spend a smaller percentage of their disposable income on food than do the citizens of any other industrial nation. This is made possible partly by the incredible efficiency of American farmers, but it is also the result of the cheap-food policy supported by most members of Congress whose constituents are non-farmers. Perhaps part of the problem is not a surplus of farmers but, rather, a surplus of non-farmers.

ALICE M. HOOPENGARNER
Kinnear, Wyo.

Gregg Easterbrook replies:

Mr. Harbaugh speaks of agricultural "net income," meaning profit. Calculating profits for the self-employed—especially farmers who reside at their places of business—is an inexact science, since living expenses blur into production costs. For example, farmers can deduct most fuel bills and can depreciate most pickup trucks and vans, though no one could seriously claim that such vehicles are never used for personal trips. If an urban worker subtracted living expenses from his salary, he wouldn't show much of a "profit" either.

Without question there are farmers who are poor, but my point was that the *typical* farmer does not live in poverty. If during 1983 each Iowa farmer had really "lost" \$1,891—in the common-sense meaning of receiving nothing while paying \$1,891 from his own pocket—there wouldn't be a single person left in Hawkeye agriculture by now. The modest 1983 average profit contrasts with another Department of Agriculture figure, "total income per farm for family personal spending and investment." In 1983 that figure was \$24,092.

Mr. Harbaugh notes that strict federal acreage controls (production limitations that exist today are easily circumvented)

might combat overproduction just as well as reduced price supports—a point the article acknowledged. He is pulling a fast one, though, by implying that such regulation offers a simple solution. Enacting meaningful limits would entail at least as much political furor as enacting price cuts, and enforcing them by routine physical inspection of 2.4 million American farms (the only way to give strict limits teeth) would be a bureaucratic nightmare, assuming it could be done at all. This doesn't make production controls a bad idea. But I feel that on balance reduced price supports are a better idea, especially since they promise lower rather than higher federal spending.

Mr. Roos and Mr. Ostler make the related point that a cut in the number of farmers does not necessarily mean a drop in overproduction. Strictly speaking, they've got me. But does the point stand scrutiny? If federal price supports were reduced, causing some farmers to quit and sell their land to other farmers who didn't quit—yes, those other farmers might keep the land in production. But now, because of the reduced federal price supports, they are doing so at their own risk. If they produce too much, they must bear the cost, just as suppliers in other businesses must bear the cost of any overproduction. It can't be that farm prices are too low for the little guy to get by and high enough for the big guy to make a killing on the same land at the same time. Provided that tax-shelter laws are altered so that the wealthy investors Mr. Ostler cautions against cannot indirectly bill the public, overproduction under the circumstances described above should be less likely. And if it does continue, consumers will reap low food prices at the wealthy investors' expense.

Professor Reubens chastises me for using 1983–1984 statistics. These were the latest available when the article was written. In most cases they are still the latest available; 1985 isn't over yet. One statistic that can be updated involves foreclosure predictions. It now appears that only about four percent of applications to commercial banks for spring planting loans were denied. Production-credit associations cut back by about six percent, while the Farmers Home Administration approved 84,000 more planting loans than it did last year, picking up some of those turned down elsewhere. This hardly means that farm debt problems are over, but it does ap-

pear to explain why the nationwide wave of foreclosures predicted last winter never occurred. Mr. Reubens says that when noting the smallness of deficiency payments I ignored larger sums involved in price supports. A sentence in the article reads, "Farmers benefit from a variety of other subsidies. . . ." He complains that I "slide rather lightly" over increasing food production worldwide. There was an entire page on that subject.

THE FUNERAL INDUSTRY

The section of David Owen's article "The Fifth Estate" (July *Atlantic*) that deals with the funeral industry's trade magazines hardly presented an accurate view of the funeral industry.

Mr. Owen places little importance on caskets, since to him their "only real function is to be lowered into the ground and covered with dirt." He considers interiors, mattresses, rubber gaskets, and watertight warranties as "unnecessary amenities." To many people, however, those features are quite important, not just items "that increase the final bill." When selecting a casket, the consumer may choose a finished wood box or a solid bronze casket, nonwatertight or watertight. The consumer chooses; funeral directors make all options known and available. What is not important to one consumer may be quite important to another.

Mr. Owen failed to mention that an alternative to the sealed vault is the non-sealed grave liner. Many cemeteries require that the casket be lowered into an outer receptacle first. This prevents the grave from caving in owing to erosion or the weight of the cemetery's tractors or digging equipment. To some people a watertight vault is important; to others it is not.

Owing to the sensitive and emotional nature of funerals, the director must establish a great deal of trust between himself and the clients he serves. How long would this moral and ethical bond last, how long would the funeral director remain in business, if he did not make his clients' wishes his top priority?

FRANK R. MARIK
Frank Marik & Sons Funeral Home
Chicago, Ill.

David Owen replies:

Contrary to Mr. Marik's claim, most consumers are offered very little choice

Uncle Sam as Debtor

For the first time since World War I, the United States is a nation in debt to the rest of the world.

From 1914 until early this year, the U.S. was a creditor nation. The world owed Uncle Sam more than he owed the world.

That's all changed now. As long as our status as a net debtor persists, what happens to America's economic future is in the hands—in the control—of foreigners more than at any other time this century.

True, our country has been in debt for most of this century. That is, it has spent more than it has taken in. The U.S. government has borrowed to make up the difference. Most of this money we borrowed from ourselves. That's why, when speaking about the debt, we could say correctly: We owe it to ourselves.

That's no longer true. Now America is living off money it owes to other countries. The U.S. debt is approaching \$1.5 trillion. It is so large that it cannot be financed by Americans alone. Our government must borrow from foreigners to make up the difference.

A lot has been written about the world's debtor nations. Until now, most of it has been written about underprivileged or hard-pressed nations in the third world. This year the U.S. is the newest nation to join the roster of debtor nations. We may be near the end in alphabetical order. But in terms of the debt's size, we head the list.

What does this mean?

For one thing, it means fewer jobs. America's huge foreign debt keeps the

dollar strong. That's a boon for American tourists abroad, but it brings havoc to American efforts to sell abroad. Our foreign debt is linked to our trade deficit—the amount by which our imports exceed our exports.

A strong dollar has attracted a flood of imports in our country. According to the U.S. Commerce Department, we lose or fail to create 25,000 jobs for every \$1 billion added to the trade deficit. Our trade deficit now is in the \$100 billion range. That's the equivalent of 2.5 million fewer jobs for Americans.

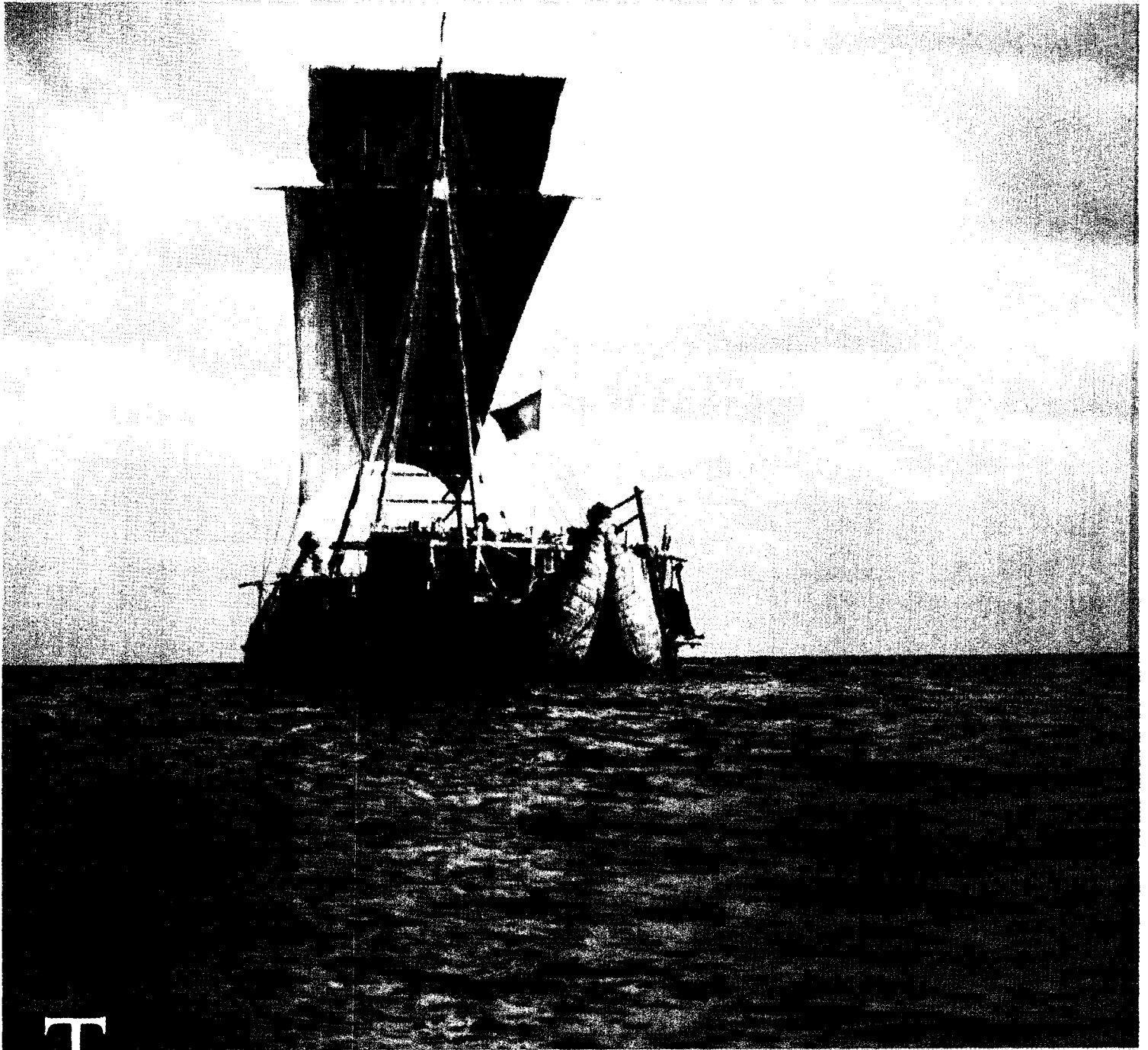
America's international debt problems are serious. But we shouldn't blame others for them. Our problems are of our own making. And the responsibility for solving them lies primarily here in America rather than among our friends abroad.

Other countries succeeded in exporting products to the world when their currencies were strong and the dollar weak. American business should be able to do the same now that the situation is reversed. That means building premium products that do not cost a premium price. It means anticipating future needs by investing heavily in research and development. It means innovating. It means advancing and applying technology skillfully. It means improving productivity. And it also means management and labor establishing and maintaining better working relationships.

Proverbs tells us that "the borrower is servant to the lender." Do we want to heed this ancient wisdom? Or do we want to become the servant?



THERE ARE VOYAGES.



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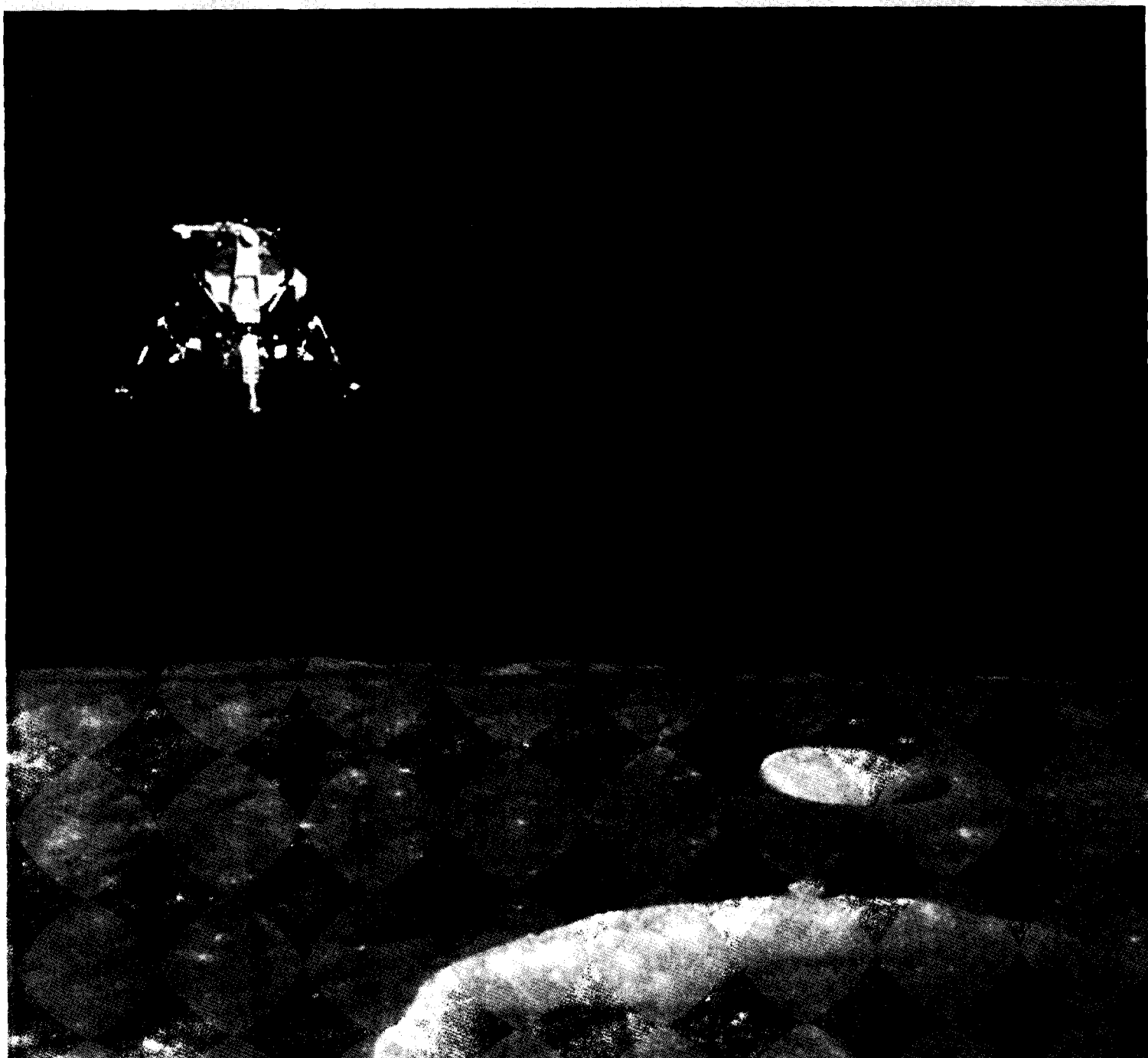
he expedition of the *Tigris*. The landing of the *Intrepid*.

One, a crew of 11 men who set out to prove that sailors in reed boats could have carried civilization outward from its cradle in Mesopotamia.

The other, a crew of three men who extended the reach of civilization beyond our own tiny cradle in the universe, the Earth. Both brought to you by programs on Public Television.

Clearly, each of these programs deals with the world around us from a different perspective. The National Geographic Specials—exploring man's relationship with his natural and cultural worlds. Bill Moyers' *A Walk Through the 20th Century*—man's relationship with his society and his times.

AND THERE ARE VOYAGES.



Yet, in a more important way, both these programs share the same goal. Both seek to help us better understand our world. To see it fresh. And see it more clearly. To come away from an hour of television with not just a feeling of having been entertained, but with genuine insight into the world's issues, its people, and above all, its complexity.

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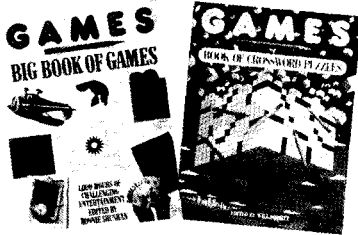
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when they shop for caskets, burial underwear, postmortem hairspray, and other funeral paraphernalia. The last time I checked, my neighborhood funeral parlor had only one wooden casket, in its basement showroom. When I expressed an interest in it, the funeral director described it disparagingly as "very minimum" (despite its adjustable Sealy mattress and \$1,100 price tag) and suggested strongly that no self-respecting person would permit a loved one to be interred in a container costing less than \$2,000.

Most people who buy caskets do so at one of the most vulnerable times in their lives. The funeral industry capitalizes on this by creating the illusion that the dead will be disappointed if their coffins are insufficiently gaudy. Far from looking out for "the consumer," the nation's funeral directors fought strenuously against federal regulation requiring them to itemize their bills. (My local parlor has a mandatory \$400 "chapel fee," even for customers who don't use the chapel.)

As for Mr. Marik's explanation that burial vaults are necessary because caskets are too flimsy, I suggest two possible solutions: dispense with caskets by burying people directly in their burial vaults, or dispense with burial vaults by building caskets that can stand up to tractors.

SWEETNESS AND HEALTH

Ellen Ruppel Shell ends her article on the relative hazards of sugar and sugar substitutes ("Sweetness and Health," August *Atlantic*) with the quote "What we really need is a fat substitute, not a sugar substitute." However jocular, this statement partly illustrates the attitude that got us into so many strange dilemmas like the one Ms. Shell describes. What we *really* need is discipline and control. Learning to respect true limits is central to any attempt to live well. Obesity is only one—relatively visible—example of a host of problems that require a greater respect for realities, not a newer, more efficacious substitute.

PAUL A. BAKER
Chicago, Ill.

Your article on sugar did nothing to encourage your readers to improve their diets. Whether or not sugar itself causes disease is beside the point. As El-

len Ruppel Shell herself stated, most sweet-tasting snacks are loaded with fat, which is perhaps the worst dietary culprit of all.

LOUISE MARSH
Berkeley, Calif.

NAPOLEON'S HEIGHT

In his article "Napoleon Elevated" (July *Atlantic*) Michael Burns states that "Napoleon shrank in the final days of his bout with intestinal cancer."

Napoleon did not have intestinal cancer. He was poisoned with arsenic periodically over the last five years of his life, and then finished off with a combination of tartar emetic, orgeat containing bitter almonds, and calomel. For the details I refer you to *The Murder of Napoleon*, by Ben Weider and David Hapgood.

DAVID HUGHES
Lagunitas, Calif.

Michael Burns replies:

Mr. Hughes is correct that Weider and Hapgood rekindled the old debate over the ex-emperor's demise, and it is entirely possible—though difficult to prove—that the end came by way of chronic arsenical poisoning. Besides, we prefer dramatic persons to die dramatically, and better murder than natural causes. But unless arsenic, tartar emetic, and bitter almonds shrink Corsicans more perceptibly than does intestinal cancer, my comments on Napoleon's height at death still apply.

ADVICE & CONSENT

Your editing of our Letter to the Editor (September *Atlantic*) removed references to the Fletcher Commission Report ("Battle Management, Communications, and Data Processing"), which is the official Administration statement on the technical requirements of the Strategic Defense Initiative (Star Wars). We think it important to note that this report shares our view: Software failure is the dominant problem.

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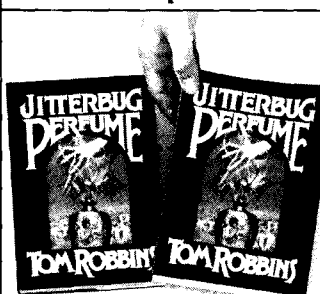
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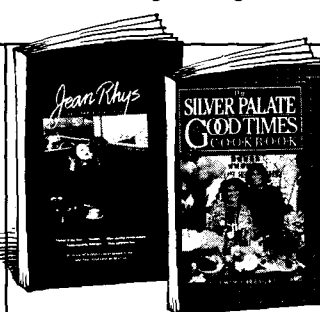
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CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN ("Why Israel Can't Take 'Bold Steps' for Peace"), the pro-chancellor of Dublin University, writes on international affairs for *The New Republic*, *The New York Review of Books*, and *The Irish Times*, as well as for *The Atlantic*. He is a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, from which he holds a Ph.D. in history. While pursuing his doctorate O'Brien embarked on a career in Ireland's diplomatic service. In 1956 he was named assistant secretary-general of the Irish Foreign Office and deputy chief of the Irish delegation to the United Nations. In 1961 he served in the Congo as the personal representative of UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld. He was subsequently the vice-chancellor of the University of Ghana and the Albert Schweitzer Professor of Humanities at New York University. In 1969 O'Brien was elected to the Dáil (the lower house of Parliament) of the Republic of Ireland, where he served until 1977. O'Brien is the author of many books, including *To Katanga and Back* (1962), *Writers and Politics* (1965), *Camus* (1969), *States of Ireland* (1972), *Herod* (1978), and *Neighbors* (1980). His essay in *The Atlantic* will appear in *The Siege: Zionism and Israel*, which will be published in February by Simon & Schuster.

TOM BENTKOWSKI (cover graphics) is the special-projects art director at *Time*.

PETER PRINGLE ("Political Science") has been a Washington correspondent for *The Observer* (London) since 1981. He was born in the village of Wilcot in Wiltshire, England, and graduated from Oxford University in 1962. From 1969 until 1980 Pringle was a foreign correspondent for *The Sunday Times* (London), covering the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and the United States. He is the co-author of several books, including *The Nuclear Barons* (1981).

JACK BEATTY ("Notes: Two Cheers for Hypocrisy") is a senior editor of *The Atlantic*.

KATIE LEISHMAN ("San Francisco: A Crisis in Public Health") is a writer and editor who lives in New York. She has reported for *The Atlantic* on child abuse and on archaeology in Egypt.

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RICHARD BAUSCH ("What Feels Like the World") is an assistant professor of English at George Mason University, in Virginia. He is the author of three novels: *Real Presence* (1980), *Take Me Back* (1981), and *The Last Good Time* (1984).

GUY BILLOUT ("Ceiling"), born in Decize, France, graduated from the École des Arts Appliqués, near Dijon, in 1960. He worked in advertising agencies in Paris for several years and then moved to New York to become a free-lance illustrator. Billout's work has received two gold medals and two silver medals from the Society of Illustrators. Billout has written and illustrated several children's books, most recently *By Camel or by Car: A Look at Transportation* (1983). His drawings appear regularly in *The Atlantic*.

ERNST HAVEMANN ("Death of the Nation") was born in Zululand, South Africa. He is a graduate of Natal University, and he served in Libya and Egypt with the South African Army during the Second World War. From 1952 until his retirement in 1975 Havemann was an executive of Shell Petroleum. Now a resident of British Columbia, Havemann was awarded second prize in the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's short-story competition in 1983 and first prize in 1984. Those stories were aired on the CBC radio program *Anthology*. "Death of the Nation" is Havemann's first work of fiction to appear in print.

PETER DAVISON ("Taking Pleasure") is the poetry editor of *The Atlantic* and a senior editor of *The Atlantic Monthly Press*. Davison won the Yale Series of Younger Poets competition in 1963 with his first book, *The Breaking of the Day*, and since then has written seven more books of poetry. His latest is *Praying Wrong: New and Selected Poems* (1984).

JAMES GALVIN ("Genesis," "About," "Riddle") teaches at the University of Iowa. He is the author of *Imaginary Timber* (1980) and *God's Mistress* (1984).

RENNIE MCQUILKIN ("Regatta") teaches English at Miss Porter's School, in Farmington, Connecticut. He is the author of two books of poetry, *An Astonishment and an Hissing* (1983) and *North Northeast* (1985).

NICHOLAS LEMANN ("The Campaign Doctors") is *The Atlantic's* national correspondent.

JOHN ROMANO ("Blue About the Bomb") is a screenwriter whose credits include an adaptation of Henry James's *The American*, to be broadcast on PBS television. Romano was previously an assistant professor of English at Columbia. He is a frequent contributor to *The New York Times Book Review* and is the author of *Dickens and Reality* (1980).

PHOEBE-LOU ADAMS ("Brief Reviews") is a staff writer for *The Atlantic*.

LLOYD SCHWARTZ ("Wired to Music") is the classical-music editor of *The Boston Phoenix* and an associate professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. He is a recipient of the ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award for music criticism, presented by the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers. A volume of Schwartz's poetry, *These People*, was published in 1981.

JAMES FALLOWS ("Software Successors") is the Washington editor of *The Atlantic*.

MICHAEL SRAGOW ("Heroes We Don't Deserve") has been a film critic for *The Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, *Rolling Stone*, and *The Boston Phoenix*. He is on the staff of *The San Francisco Examiner*.

HAL HINSON ("Nature Made Perfect") is the film critic for *St. Louis* magazine. His reviews have appeared in *Vogue*, *GQ*, *American Film*, and *The Washington Post*, as well as in *The Atlantic*.

DOROTHY OSBORNE ("Acrostic No. 3") crafts puzzles at her home in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON ("The Puzzler") create crossword puzzles for several publications.



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REPORTS & COMMENT

NOTES

TWO CHEERS FOR HYPOCRISY

IF YOU ARE looking for evidence to support the thesis that the United States is in a period of civic decadence—a period when almost anything that can be thought can and must be said—then hold your moral magnifying glass to a moment in last spring's House debate over a bill to send non-lethal aid to the Nicaraguan rebels. ("Non-lethal" was, of course, a fig leaf. Receiving everything but rifles and ammunition from us, the rebels would have that much more money with which to buy arms from other suppliers.) A Democratic congressman rose, said that he was for the aid, and urged his fellow Democrats to vote for it too. Otherwise, he said, they would be vulnerable to attack in the next election for being "soft on communism." Reporters later cited that argument as swaying many other Democrats to support the bill, which passed 248 to 184.

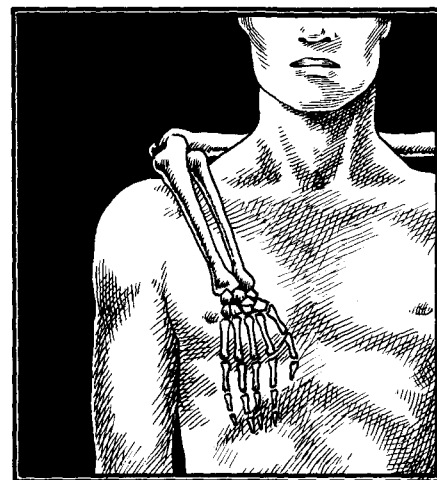


What was decadent here was the congressman's corrosive excess of candor. Although fear has motivated lawmakers since political competition began, when the congressman said what he did he broke a convention of public speech. That once powerful convention obliged him to say something like, I am voting for this bill because aiding the contras is the only way to pressure the Sandinista government to stop supplying the rebels in El Salvador, stop oppressing the Miskito Indians, and start becoming a democracy. His true motive may have been fear that a future opponent would charge him with being soft on communism, but he should never have said so. He owed a tribute of hypocrisy to the idea of virtue.

For his motive was a base one. It is plainly contemptible to vote for the killing of men, women, and children so that your political career may be prolonged. It is less contemptible to cast such a vote in the spirit of "We do this evil that good may come" or to blink the question of dubious means altogether by painting Nicaragua as a totalitarian state, a strategic menace to the vital interests of the United States, or a threat to Texas. You can excuse a lot of killing if a "vital interest of the United States" is at stake. Even defending Texas is a grander cause than securing the re-election of an eminently fungible congressman.

Long ago Plato wrote that the polis needs "noble lies" to secure belief. Nothing has changed in that respect. The polis still needs noble lies. They keep us from gagging on the truth. They also give us a vision of what Plato quaintly called "the Good" to measure ourselves by and aim at and maybe even someday reach. Two cheers, then, for hypocrisy: the guardian of belief, and so of moral possibility.

—Jack Beatty



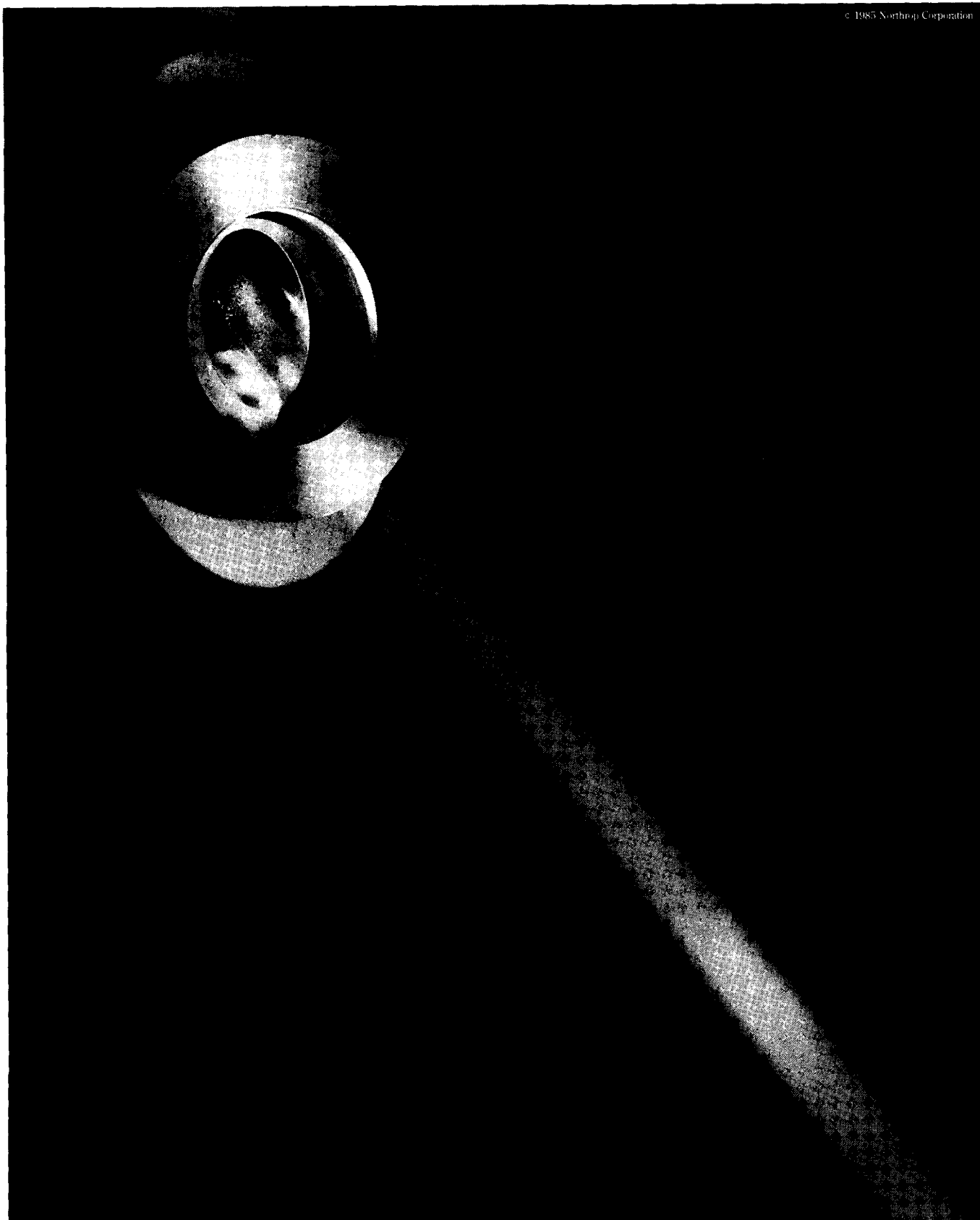
SAN FRANCISCO

A CRISIS IN PUBLIC HEALTH

One city's united efforts to control AIDS have helped reduce its mysteries—but not its menace

IF A CITY CAN be said to have a consciousness, San Francisco's is bounded by two earthquakes: the one that happened and the one that is going to happen. People here grow up with a vague apprehension that one day the place is going to shudder, go up in smoke, and fall into the Pacific. The community is always poised for catastrophe and denying it at the same time—which is more or less how it has responded to the epidemic of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, or AIDS.

San Francisco is uniquely constituted to be hard hit. In a population of 700,000, it is estimated that at least 70,000 are gay men. The city is also uniquely equipped to respond. Both a county and a city, San Francisco has two



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public hospitals and a strong tradition of populist health care: about 17 percent of the combined budget goes to health affairs. Since 1982 the city has appropriated more than \$10 million for contracts with AIDS-related social-service agencies, which provide such a continuum of outpatient care that only 10 percent of San Francisco's AIDS patients are in the hospital at any given time.

Everyone credits Mayor Dianne Feinstein for City Hall's early response. In 1982 she authorized a midyear supplementary AIDS budget of \$180,000, and in 1983 she authorized \$4.3 million. For several years the city has had a budget surplus. Although the Mayor stresses that the AIDS funds have not come out of the surplus per se, it has given the city an operating margin that many communities lack.

The situation has not yet arisen in which AIDS patients are perceived to be served at the expense of another disabled group. But the surplus has run dry, according to the Mayor. "We've allocated new monies for AIDS, but we can't go on doing that," Feinstein says. "The times have changed. The numbers have changed." San Francisco has had 1,310 AIDS patients, about 643 of whom are still living. The number of AIDS cases has been doubling every nine months, nationally as well as in the city.

Feinstein heads the AIDS Task Force of the U.S. Council of Mayors. Her work mostly consists of distributing information about what San Francisco is doing. The inaction of cities with only a handful of cases is understandable. But the response has been little better in Los Angeles, which has about as many cases as San Francisco, or New York, with three times as many cases. New York City has only one outpatient AIDS clinic, which opened this spring.

To say, however, that San Francisco has dealt with AIDS better than any other city is not to say that more patients are getting well. None of them are. AIDS is a horrific disease. "It eats people alive—from the outside in and the inside out," says John Russell, who performs AIDS screenings at the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic Medical Section. AIDS causes a person's immune system to collapse, and as it does, the patient can be beset by lesions, herpes, shingles, oral thrush, conjunctivitis, a protozoan infection of the lungs, intestinal parasites, toxoplasmosis, raging fever, diarrhea, and sometimes dementia. Cryptosporidiosis of the intestine, which causes the debilitat-

ing diarrhea that finishes off many AIDS patients, still eludes treatment, and it is not unusual for someone to go from 150 pounds to seventy-five pounds before death. All that can be done is to care for, comfort, study, and experiment with patients who have a virus more lethal and mysterious than any in modern medical history. Health-care professionals, social-service workers, and hundreds of volunteers here have these activities down to a fine art. "If I had AIDS anywhere west of the Mississippi, I would crawl to San Francisco," says Dr. Mervyn Silverman, who was the city's director of public health until last January.

Most AIDS patients at one time or another use the outpatient or inpatient services—Ward 86 and Ward 5-B—at San Francisco General Hospital. It is the good fortune of AIDS patients in this city that perhaps the country's best AIDS clinic happened to be created at a public hospital. If a person has MediCal state health insurance, and nothing else—true of about 65 percent of the city's AIDS patients—he still has access to the finest care available anywhere. The program at SFGH began in September of 1981, with an oncology clinic that was open only half a day each week, during which typically one patient with Kaposi's sarcoma would be seen. (KS, a multifocal spreading cancer of the lining of the capillaries, which usually involves the skin, is one of the most common "presenting afflictions" of AIDS patients.) Today the SFGH staff has 250 AIDS-related appointments each week. The hospital's AIDS clinic consists of six separate AIDS programs, two oncology clinics, and an in-patient ward that has just expanded from twelve to twenty-five beds. The overflow of AIDS patients is distributed among San Francisco's twenty hospitals, which fortunately have had a serious oversupply of beds.

The SFGH clinic works closely with a remarkable network of AIDS-related community agencies. The San Francisco AIDS Foundation coordinates AIDS-prevention education projects, runs an AIDS hotline, and arranges emergency housing and food services for patients. The Godfather Fund provides personal-care items for people with AIDS. The Bay Area Lawyers for Individual Freedom offer free legal advice. The AIDS Home Care Hospice Program provides home care for patients in the usually agonizing final stages of AIDS.

Eighty percent of the city's AIDS patients turn at some point during their ill-

ness to the Shanti Project, a counseling service for the dying and their friends, lovers, and families. Each patient is assigned to an emotional-support counselor, while practical-support counselors run errands for homebound patients. Housing is available for displaced people with AIDS, who pay 25 percent of their monthly income, whatever that might be. For the first time the Shanti Project faces a waiting list, which Jim Rulon, until recently its public-relations officer, fears will grow as the city's caseload increases.

People come from all over the world to visit the SFGH clinic and the various agencies. "Most American visitors are not sent officially by their own cities," Rulon says. "They are from community agencies trying—and failing—to persuade their cities to start programs while the number of AIDS patients is still manageable."

SAN FRANCISCO MIGHT have as little to suffer patients as other cities were it not for the early warnings of the town's Cassandra in this crisis, Dr. Marc Conant, a soft-spoken man from Florida, who is a dermatologist at the University of California School of Medicine. Soon after the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued a memo, in July of 1981, on the outbreak of cancers in gay men, Conant opened the small KS clinic that eventually gave birth to the program at SFGH. He enlisted the volunteer clinical assistance of Dr. Paul Volberding, the chief of oncology, and Dr. Donald Abrams, a fellow in oncology and hematology at the University of California at San Francisco.

In 1979 Abrams had been a resident in internal medicine working in the hematology department at Kaiser Hospital, in San Francisco. He was sent a number of gay patients with swollen lymph glands, and he performed routine biopsies on them to be tested for lymphoma. All reports came back negative. When Abrams began working in the KS clinic, two years later, he noticed that many of the patients also had swollen lymph glands, which they reported having had for several years. "I began to suspect that all these men I'd seen had different stages of the same disease," he says. Abrams began a study of patients with lymphadenopathy syndrome—swollen lymph nodes and various minor symptoms and infections—which has remained his special interest in AIDS.

About half the AIDS patients at SFGH

first come to the clinic with KS, and about half have pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (PCP), a protozoan infection of the lungs, which signals almost certain death within an average of ten months of diagnosis. Both of these diseases were prominently mentioned in the surveillance definition of AIDS—then unnamed—that the CDC issued in 1981. This included KS, PCP, lymphoma of the brain, and eight fungal, bacterial, and viral opportunistic infections.

But the greatest number of patients appearing at the clinic and in doctors' offices around town are like those that Abrams has been seeing since 1979: men with lymphadenopathy, minor irregularities in immune response, and generalized complaints of fatigue, night sweats, fevers, weight loss, diarrhea, and chills. About 10 to 15 percent of these men go on to develop AIDS. A few seem to get better. But for the majority the symptoms, which have come to be known as ARC (AIDS-related conditions), just persist. Abrams is convinced that the lymphadenopathy syndrome reflects a healthy immune response—the body fighting back against the AIDS virus.

However, the symptoms of ARC can sometimes be even more debilitating than those of AIDS. Many men have died without ever reaching the confines of the CDC's surveillance definition. Dr. James Campbell, the chairman of the scientific-affairs committee of the Bay Area Physicians for Human Rights (a gay group) and an associate professor of internal medicine at UCSF, has seen fifty cases of AIDS—and 500 cases of ARC. "I had one patient in bed for eight months with diarrhea and fever before he developed the infection that finally killed him," Campbell says. Only post-mortem could the infection be diagnosed as one of those on the CDC's list.

Virtually all of the lab work for the SFGH clinics is performed by a medical virologist at UCSF, Dr. Jay Levy, whom Volberding first approached in 1982. After the French discovered a lymphadenopathy-associated AIDS virus, in the spring of 1983, Levy's was one of two American labs to isolate a strain of it in U.S. patients. Researchers at the National Cancer Institute called the virus HTLV-III (human T-cell lymphotropic virus, type III), and Levy called it ARV (AIDS-associated retrovirus). A retrovirus is a virus that has an enzyme, reverse transcriptase, that can make a DNA copy of its RNA genetic program.

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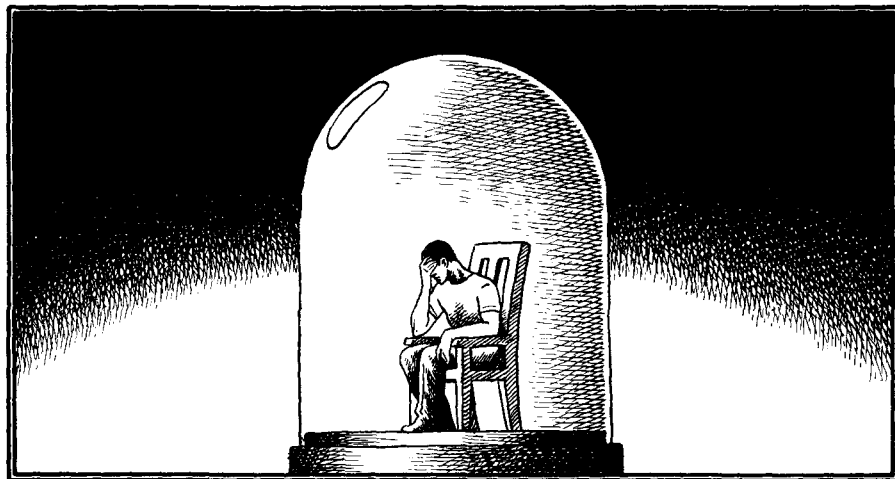
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Many viruses kill a cell that they invade. Most retroviruses do not. Instead, the DNA copy integrates itself with the chromosomes of an invaded cell. "In effect, the invaded cell becomes a factory of the retrovirus," Levy says. As the cell divides, more virus is produced.

The AIDS virus can also, through a procedure not yet fully understood, kill cells—in particular the T-4 positive cells, master cells of the body's immune system. The destruction of the immune system leaves individuals vulnerable to the opportunistic infections and cancers. At first it was believed that the AIDS virus had a specific affinity for the T-cells. But Levy has found that the AIDS virus can invade not just T-cells but also macrophage, or so-called scavenger, cells, and he has repeatedly found the AIDS virus in the brain. Whether the

majority of AIDS and ARC patients also have herpes viruses, which may be another essential co-factor.

Levy's lab is always working double time. Because so few labs in California are properly equipped and staffed—or willing—to perform viral cultures, he and his team must do all of them for any research projects at SFGH and for most projects in the state. No patient, even if he has every symptom of "frank" AIDS (that is, his symptoms strictly conform to the CDC surveillance definition), can be accepted for a drug trial unless the virus can be cultured out of his blood or tissue. The procedure can take six weeks and is expensive—\$500 to \$1,000. Patients have been on waiting lists for weeks and sometimes months to get a culture. Some have died while waiting.



AIDS virus can kill cells other than the T-4 positive cells remains questionable.

Levy now believes that the AIDS retrovirus not only gives rise to opportunistic infections but is itself an opportunistic infection, flourishing in a body whose immune system has already been compromised by other agents, such as drugs, parasites, viruses, and malnutrition. That underlying immuno-deficiency, he believes, may be what the groups that have been associated with AIDS—namely, drug addicts, transfusion recipients, malnourished Africans and Haitians, and gays—have in common. (Gays are "immunocompromised" as a group, exposed through multiple sexual contacts to all sorts of fungal and bacterial infections routinely treated with antibiotics.) Levy's theory is generally regarded as one more hypothesis that needs to be tested. Most researchers do agree that the AIDS virus is a necessary but not sufficient factor in causing AIDS. The great

THE VIRUS CAN, hypothetically, be attacked at any of three points. If a case is caught early, the virus may be attacked in the bloodstream. If the virus has already entered a cell, it is still possible to inhibit the action of the enzyme reverse transcriptase, preventing the RNA from producing its DNA copy and thus becoming part of the cell. (The controversial French drug HPA-23 is a reverse-transcriptase inhibitor.) The third possibility is to kill infected cells. So far all the experimental anti-viral drugs reflect the first two strategies.

Eight AIDS drug research trials are currently under way in the SFGH clinic. The drugs tested have included anti-viral agents such as Alpha-Interferon and Suramin, and also immuno-enhancers such as Isoprinsine and Interleukin-II. Although the anti-viral agents appear to inhibit replication of the virus for as long as the patient takes them, there is no evidence so far that this

changes the patient's prognosis. As for the immuno-enhancers, some clinicians, including Volberding, fear that when used alone they may do more harm than good. The virus needs healthy cells to feed upon, and in stimulating the production of new T-cells the drugs may accelerate the progress of AIDS. More drug trials are needed. Volberding would like to do more-specific tests on Suramin and on Ribovirin, another anti-viral agent. If funds become available, Volberding would like to attempt to use bone-marrow transplants to reverse the degeneration of the immune system. "But even more important than the transplants, I think," Volberding says, "is the possibility for combining an anti-viral drug like Suramin with an immuno-enhancer, which the patient would take regularly."

Dan Turner, a thirty-seven-year-old playwright, was one of the first AIDS patients Paul Volberding saw, in 1981, and he is one of the longest-lived AIDS patients anywhere. Like many patients in San Francisco, Turner has tried a series of experimental drug therapies as well as some of the alternative healing methods for which California is famous, such as visualization and acupuncture.

He attributes the stabilization of his KS in April of 1982 to a combination of chemical and psychological remedies. Few clinicians would dismiss the unconventional therapies that patients are turning to. "Everybody's trying everything—homeopathy, macrobiotic diets, acupuncture," Volberding says. "I don't discourage any of it, but I want to know what a patient's doing."

Turner is currently on a drug trial with Alpha-Interferon. Like many AIDS patients, he would like to see the Food and Drug Administration release all experimental drugs on a "compassionate use" basis, inform patients of potential side effects, and let them choose whether or not to try one.

Originally, drug trials focused on patients with frank AIDS rather than those with ARC, but this is changing. Researchers have been unable to culture the virus out of 50 percent of patients with frank AIDS, which they have interpreted to mean that the virus has exhausted its host. It is the ARC patients from whom the greatest amount of virus can be cultured, which suggests to many that they are both the most contagious individuals and the best candidates for therapeutic intervention. The presence of virus indicates the presence of still living T-cells, which in turn indicates at

least the potential for a strong immune response. But treatment of ARC patients is a controversial matter. "Remember that their symptoms probably indicate that the body is trying to handle the virus itself," Abrams says. "And you don't want to interfere until it is very clear that the system is losing and the patient is heading for frank AIDS."

The prospects for treating patients at an early stage in the syndrome only underscore the value of outpatient services. The people who are most contagious probably don't even know they are infected. In San Francisco walk-in free clinics are able to identify incipient cases, and outpatients can participate in chemotherapy and drug trials under the supervision of nurses and paramedics. In New York patients have sometimes been hospitalized for weeks to undergo procedures that could be done in specialized outpatient clinics.

PROTECTING THE AS yet uninfected is the government's chief priority. Like many others, Jay Levy is in quest of a vaccine. The AIDS virus has mutated; several different substrains have already been identified, which could make a vaccine more elusive. Moreover, while most viruses stimulate the production of antibodies that in turn neutralize the virus, the antibodies that many patients infected with the AIDS virus produce appear not to neutralize it, making it a difficult candidate for a vaccine—although antibody response is not the only factor in developing a vaccine. It took ten years to produce a vaccine for hepatitis, a comparatively straightforward virus. No one is likely to create a vaccine from the lethal AIDS virus itself. Rather, genetically engineered proteins of the virus will probably be used.

Every virus has a mind of its own, and much depends on the reasons that a virus mutates—if it "chooses" to do so most viruses do not. A virus might mutate to protect itself, as staph did against penicillin, thereby growing more virulent, or to become less dangerous, in order to maintain itself in the environment. It is too early to know about this virus, but medical history provides some clues: the flu in the epidemic of 1918 killed millions and then disappeared. Generally, a pathogen so lethal fells the most susceptible in a population while the rest of the population develops some natural immunity.

The search for a vaccine will be intense and could take years. Marc Conant

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is concerned that pharmaceutical companies will conclude that it is not worth putting their best minds to the task and will only halfheartedly seek venture capital. He has proposed that the federal government create a financial incentive for vaccine research and declare an advance purchase order—"a million orders for a safe vaccine at a hundred dollars a shot." One of the greatest tragedies of AIDS is that because the incubation period can be as long as six years, or even longer (though sometimes it is as short as several months), by the time anyone knew that a vaccine was needed for the new virus, as many as 300,000 Americans had already been infected. Dr. James Curran, the head of the AIDS Task Force at the CDC, estimates that by now up to a million Americans have been infected.

A tremendous amount of clinical investigation is obviously needed, and San Francisco would seem the ideal place to do it. Yet there are only two federally funded projects in the San Francisco area. One makes possible an epidemiological study sponsored by the University of California at Berkeley's School of Public Health; the other is a multidisciplinary clinical-research project. In May of 1983 the National Cancer Institute awarded a non-renewable, three-year, \$800,000 project grant to Drs. Volberding, Conant, and John Ziegler, a professor of medicine at UCSF. The money was to be distributed among virologists, epidemiologists, clinicians, and immunologists. Jay Levy receives about \$100,000 a year from the grant; the SFGH clinic receives only about \$70,000 a year.

In the summer of 1983 Conant and Volberding and twenty-eight other scientists from San Francisco and Los Angeles met with Willie Brown, the influential speaker of the state assembly. Two months later the California legislature allocated \$2.9 million for AIDS research. It is highly unusual for a state legislature to fund scientific research, and consequently there was no existing mechanism for peer review. The University of California, it was decided, would serve in that capacity and disburse research monies, which almost everyone in the city thought should have come from the federal level.

Resentment against the federal government runs high. "People are dying here at the rate of nearly two a day," says Mervyn Silverman, the former city director of public health. "If a fire or flood

had killed off that many citizens, at least the President would have sent an investigative team. In fact the President has never publicly uttered the word *AIDS*." By the end of September the government had allocated \$108,960,000 in AIDS funding, the greatest single part of which was for epidemiological studies tracing the spread of the disease. Only 4.1 percent was designated for information dissemination and public affairs. Four years into the epidemic the situation may finally be changing: the Administration recently released \$46.5 million in special AIDS funding, almost half of it for public education.

However, no independent federal agency has been created to coordinate AIDS research and education nationwide or to expedite the disbursement of research funds. "It can take eighteen months for a grant to undergo review by the National Institutes of Health, and in that time, how many people have died?" Levy asks.

IT WAS ONLY in the summer of 1983 that the general community of San Francisco awoke to the AIDS crisis and gays realized that this was not going to be like toxic-shock syndrome or Legionnaire's disease, a problem that would die down or that clinicians would quickly unravel. "There was a wave of panic about common contagion in San Francisco the likes of which this country has rarely seen," says Mitch Bart, the deputy director of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation. The number of calls to the foundation's hotline doubled, from 800 to 1,600 a month, most of them having to do with subjects like sneezing, shared toothbrushes, and gay waiters in restaurants. Bus drivers passing through gay neighborhoods wore surgical masks. Several doctors showed reluctance to perform surgery on AIDS victims, and various funeral parlors refused to embalm them.

By the end of that summer detailed retrospective interviews with AIDS patients had proved that AIDS is related to specific sexual practices or the exchange of infected blood. The syndrome was neither identifiable nor curable, but it was preventable. It became clear that although the federal government had earmarked money for "education," it was not going to tell people explicitly how to protect themselves. "Gay sex is illegal in half the states in this country, so the government was not about to issue brochures about it," says Ralph Payne, the

vice president of the Stonewall Gay Democratic Club. "All they could do is print materials that said 'No Sex,' and that just wasn't going to fly." In late 1983 and early 1984 the AIDS Foundation began devising educational materials with graphic artists, the gay political clubs, psychologists, and the Bay Area Physicians for Human Rights.

The move was on to "eroticize safe sex." Standing-room-only crowds attended safe-sex lectures and forums (sign-language interpreted) at neighborhood churches, social clubs, and the Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality, on subjects like learning how to make condoms as well as protection from the AIDS virus and finding out "how to buy and use condoms successfully." Men talked about having "re-eroticized."

Activities were classified as safe, possibly safe, and unsafe. Safe practices involve only skin-to-skin contact, in which the transfer of virus is unlikely unless one partner has breaks in the skin, which could give virus access to the bloodstream; there is no exchange of body fluids. The safe acts listed in the safe-sex guidelines released by the Bay Area Physicians for Human Rights in the summer of 1984 include massaging, hugging, mutual masturbation, social kissing (dry), and body-to-body rubbing. Possibly safe acts involve only minimal tissue disturbance and limited exchange of certain body fluids. They include French kissing (wet), anal intercourse with a condom, sucking if stopped before climax, and oral-vaginal contact. Finally, unsafe acts, which involve tissue trauma or the exchange of body fluids or both, include anal intercourse without a condom, semen or urine in the mouth, the sharing of sex toys, and oral-anal contact. It is recommended that all couples avoid these acts unless the partners have been monogamous or celibate since 1978.

The guidelines caused some surprise with their inclusion of other than exclusively gay sexual practices. The debate over French kissing has never let up. Less than 0.5 percent of San Franciscans with AIDS fall outside the designated risk groups, in which routes of transmission are clear. Saliva seems to be a very unlikely vehicle for transmitting the virus; although the virus has been found in saliva, it may be that one or both partners must have broken tissue or open lesions in or around the mouth to transmit the virus. Can French kissing alone lead

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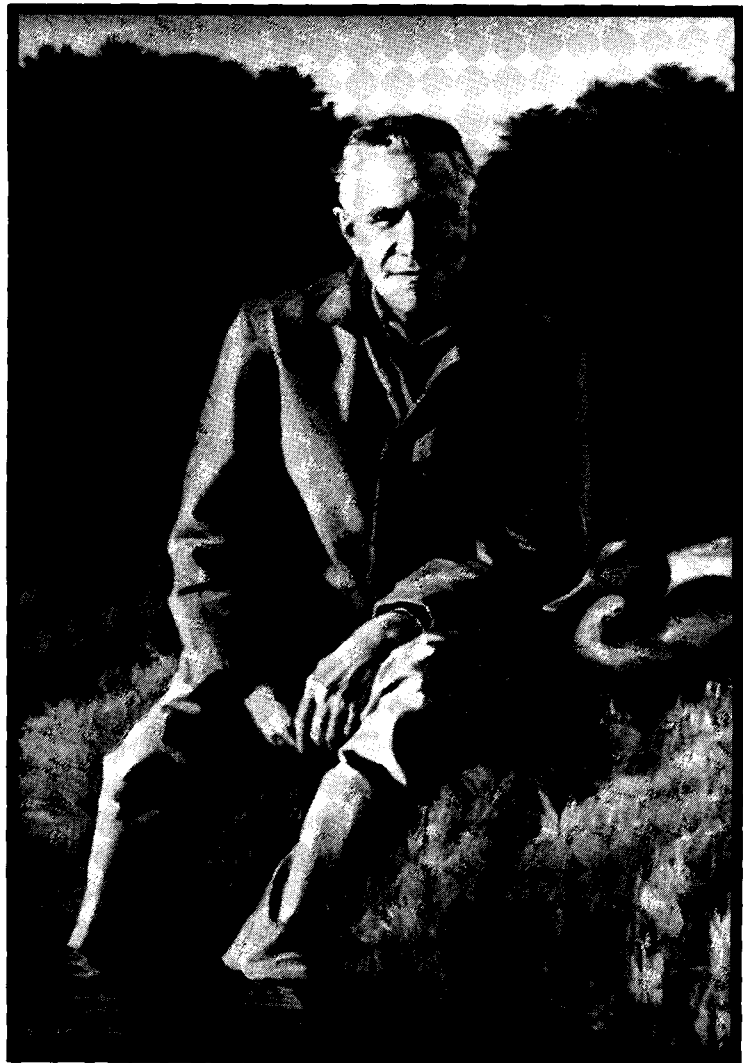
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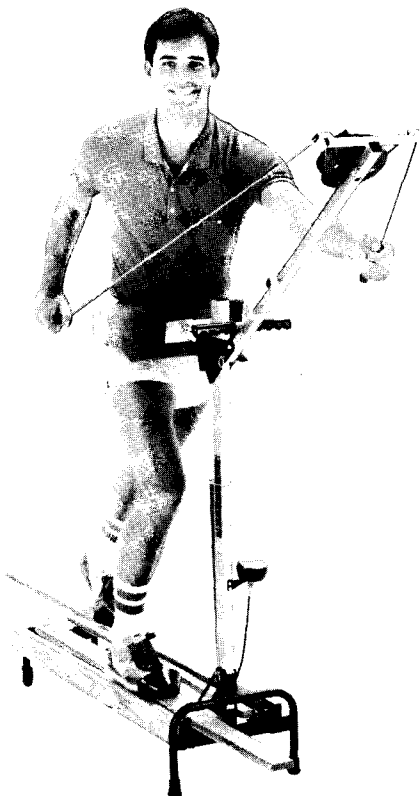
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to the disease? As with so many of the questions most often asked about AIDS, no one knows for certain. Cunnilingus was listed as possibly safe because both saliva and vaginal secretions may contain the AIDS virus. Risk may be increased during menstruation.

In late 1984 vaginal intercourse without a condom was added to the list of unsafe activities. The vaginal wall is thicker than the rectal wall, but it is still possible for tissue to break and contaminated semen to enter the bloodstream. "We're recommending the use of condoms for everybody, for both rectal and vaginal sex, when one or both partners have engaged in activities that might have put them at risk," says Holly Smith, the public-information director of the AIDS Foundation. Dr. Constance Wofsy, a co-director of the AIDS clinic and the inpatient unit at SFGH, adds, "From the beginning, twenty-five percent of people with AIDS have been heterosexual. We're now starting to see, in significant numbers, people who fall outside any risk group and who are contracting the virus through their sexual activity alone. If people's sexual practices involve partners whose background is unknown to them, they should consider how safe-sex guidelines might affect their behavior."

One hundred and twenty-two cases of heterosexually transmitted AIDS had been reported nationwide to the CDC by the end of August—less than one percent of the total of 12,408 AIDS cases. Only fourteen of the 122 cases were transmitted from women—all of whom were in high-risk groups—to men. Nobody knows why this is so. Theories abound, an obvious one being that women are less effective transmitters of the virus because women do not ejaculate infectious material and, moreover, vaginal secretions can act as a disinfectant. Rectal walls are thin and absorbent; vaginal walls are not.

In Central Africa, where AIDS patients have been the subject of many studies, AIDS afflicts men and women in about equal numbers. Yet those studies reveal possible factors generally unknown in the United States: malnutrition; the shared use of ritual scarification needles; widespread skepticism of any medication not administered through syringes, which are unsterilized and used repeatedly; the reported practice of rectal intercourse during women's menstrual periods; and men's aversion to condoms, which are usually white, a color associat-

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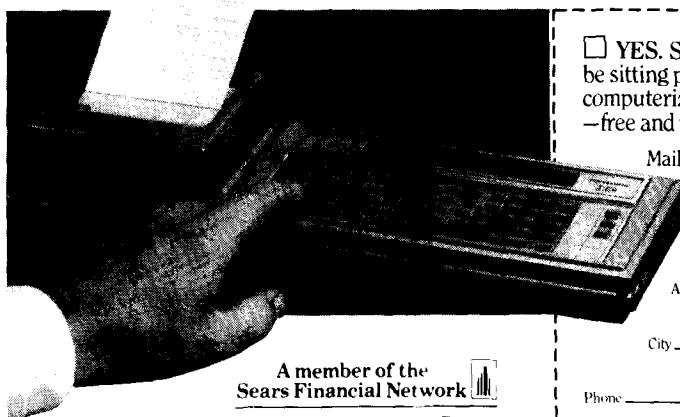
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ed with death. This is all conjecture. The fact remains that men can transmit the virus to women, women can transmit it to men, and beyond that people can make their guesses and take their chances.

In the first half of 1984 there was growing concern—at City Hall, in the Department of Public Health, and among certain members of the gay community itself—about bathhouses, sex establishments where men engaged in what was referred to as “high-volume-high-frequency sex.” Several people with AIDS had been seen in the baths. Mayor Feinstein wanted the businesses closed, while Silverman, then the director of public health, was hopeful that the gay leadership would take action. The AIDS Foundation regarded the baths as potential schoolhouses. “We started meeting with the owners,” Holly Smith says. “We wanted them to be more active distributors of safe-sex cards, condoms, and lubricants. We were moving toward a self-regulation program.” The gay community was divided on the issue. The mainstream Alice B. Toklas Gay and Lesbian Democratic Club was “anti-closure,” while the Harvey Milk Lesbian and Gay Democratic Club was “pro-closure.” People argued whether the real issue was government intervention, public health, AIDS-phobia, or homophobia, and at least one club meeting ended in fistfights.

Matthew Coles, a prominent lawyer in the gay community, was one of the many who were ambivalent about the problem. “There wasn’t one gay activist in fifty who would actually advocate going to the baths,” he says. “The bathhouse owners were a bunch of capitalists trying to make themselves out as civil libertarians. They never did a damn thing for the community. Still, I think they should have been allowed to operate their businesses. I think Nazis should be allowed to march in Skokie. That doesn’t mean I’d want to defend them.”

Finally, a longtime gay activist, Larry Littlejohn, announced that he was going to put a bathhouse-closure initiative on the ballot in the city’s upcoming elections. Nobody was pleased. The Mayor didn’t want the issue kicking around on the eve of the Democratic Convention. Gays feared that the initiative would amount to a gay-rights referendum, which, given the citywide fears about AIDS, they didn’t want. The initiative never made the ballot, because, as Lit-

tlejohn had hoped, Silverman closed down the baths in October.

San Francisco remains the only city that has taken such action. Many gays still feel that shutting the baths accomplished nothing and that those who wanted unsafe sex just took it home or outdoors. “Anybody who wants to play Russian roulette in their own bedroom can,” Silverman says. “But nobody can tell me that Buena Vista Park, fifty-five degrees with the fog rolling in, is the same as a softly lit bathhouse.”

The baths controversy was as important symbolically as politically. It forced gays to acknowledge that forms of sexual expression for which they had fought, first privately and then communally, were, for the duration of the epidemic and perhaps forever, no longer in their own best interests. State Assembly Speaker Willie Brown said in a speech, “It was as if blacks had come through the civil-rights movement only to find out that they couldn’t sit wherever they wanted on the bus after all.”

PEOPLE AT THE AIDS Foundation often say, “Education is the only vaccine we have.” Recently epidemiologists have been trying to gauge the impact of educational campaigns on gay men’s sexual behavior and indirectly to project future incidence of AIDS. Because the incubation period for the disease can be so long, it is difficult to know how effective the campaigns have been in decreasing the rate of transmission. The incubation period for gonorrhea is only six days, so researchers at the Department of Health’s Bureau of Communicable Disease Control decided to use the rate of rectal gonorrhea—also contracted through passive anal intercourse—as a surrogate indicator. In 1981 the City Clinic, a free walk-in clinic, averaged between 400 and 500 cases a month. In recent months the average number of cases has fallen below sixty.

Various epidemiological studies of gay men’s sex lives and health, started when the epidemic was first recognized, are being examined for clues to the natural history of AIDS—who gets it, who doesn’t, and why. Andrew Moss, of the Department of Epidemiology at UCSF, says, “You couldn’t do this sort of research anywhere else but San Francisco—walk down a block, knocking on doors, asking ‘Hello, are you homosexual, and if so, how many times have you had rectal sex this month?’”

Almost incidentally, some of the sur-

veys provide an interesting profile of the city's gay community and its life-styles. A 1984 survey sponsored by the AIDS Foundation depicts an upscale population of some 70,000 gay men, more than half of whom have moved to San Francisco since 1974, when the gay-freedom movement was gathering momentum. The saying is that gays go to Los Angeles to make money, to New York to launch a career, and to San Francisco to be gay. A great many have done extremely well. Forty-four percent have pre-tax earnings of \$25,000 or more (only 28 percent of all San Franciscans do); 57 percent have college degrees and 21 percent have postgraduate degrees (51 percent of San Franciscans have no more than a high school diploma).

Like many others, this survey revealed changes in gay men's sex lives, but the changes were more quantitative than qualitative. When asked about their behavioral intentions for the future, half the respondents said they expected to be practicing unsafe oral and anal sex less than in the past—but half said "as often as in the past." Leon McKusick is the project director on the AIDS Behavioral Research Project, sponsored by UCSF, in which some 800 men are surveyed every six months. In November of 1982 respondents reported an average of 5.9 partners and 4.8 unsafe sex acts per month; in November of 1984 the respondents reported 2.5 partners and 0.8 unsafe sex acts. McKusick says that "men are having less sex in general, but the notion of safe sex is only beginning to catch on." His research partner, Dr. Stephen Morin, reports that both in the study findings and in his private psychotherapy practice even monogamous gay couples in long-term relationships say that they are having less sex. "At some level people are associating sex with death," Morin says. "It is inevitable."

No one has formally correlated changes in sexual conduct with the level of risk, but every indication is that eroticization is not catching on fast enough. In 1981 San Francisco had a total of twenty-four AIDS cases. This year in the month of July alone sixty-four new cases and forty deaths were reported. A man who has one unsafe sexual encounter in San Francisco today runs the same risk of contracting AIDS as a man who had ten three years ago, according to Dr. Dean Echenberg, the director of the Bureau of Communicable Disease Control at the city's Depart-

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ment of Public Health. Marc Conant recently diagnosed five cases of AIDS in one week at the SFGH clinic. He says, "One of the men asked me, 'Say, this isn't going to affect my sex life, is it?'" Many gay men report knowing people with AIDS who are still cruising the bars.

The results of certain surveys carry serious implications for other San Franciscans. Twenty-one percent of the respondents in the AIDS Foundation survey of gay men said that they have recently had female sexual contacts—and the great majority of these were self-described gays, not bisexuals. John Russell, of the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic Medical Section, reports that a growing number of women who are not from any designated high-risk group are coming in for the screening service.

Last year San Francisco had its first

men come down with AIDS, they'll say they got it from a gay man? No way. They'll say they got it from a prostitute."

Lorenzini, who occasionally mans the hotline that his organization has established, reports that he has recently received a growing number of phone calls from married men worried that they may be giving AIDS to their families. One straight man who had had a few gay contacts developed ARC and broke off his engagement. He is now beginning to see symptoms of AIDS in his ex-fiancée. Once married himself, Lorenzini is concerned about another possible high-risk group that few people have mentioned. "There are a lot of gay men who have never really been comfortable with their own sexuality and who are using the AIDS epidemic as a reason to return to women—after years of an active gay sex life."



two cases of AIDS in men who reported having had contact with prostitutes who, researchers learned, took drugs intravenously. There has been some talk of making prostitutes an official high-risk group. "The issue is that these women were IV drug users, not that they were prostitutes," says Margo St. James, the founder of COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics), which is a support network for prostitutes in San Francisco. "When are people going to realize that it isn't how many times you have sex, it's what kind of sex you have?"

Revelations about AIDS cases are bound to undermine common assumptions about American sexual practices and the prevalence of bisexuality. "Ninety percent of the men who go to parks and public restrooms for sex are straight men, many of them married," says John Lorenzini, the president of the People With AIDS Alliance, which was formed last year. "You think if those

IGNORANCE AND fear of AIDS is pervasive here. Many gays perceive public suspicion of them as homophobic, but it is pretty clear that if red-haired women were the most affected group, people would be giving them a wide berth. "We still have guys come in and say things like, 'A thin, pale little man was sitting next to me on the bus and sneezed all over me—I just want to make absolutely sure I didn't catch it,'" says Dr. B. "Flash" Gordon, the director of the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic Medical Section. What people seem most concerned about is the notion that the virus is mutating and will soon be transmitted in more mundane ways. Although a review of five years of clinical study of patients' histories shows no new routes of transmission, thousands and thousands of people still think, 'Today, anal sex; tomorrow, toilet seats.'

Until this spring no one had any way of knowing whether or not he had been

infected by the AIDS virus. In March the first antibody test for the virus was released and made available to blood banks. When one doctor warned that high-risk people might donate blood specifically to get the antibody-test results, the federal government allocated about \$9 million—which had been earmarked for AIDS-prevention education—for the creation of test sites around the country. This summer anyone in San Francisco could take the antibody test. Many gays deeply resented the diversion of funds.

If the summer of 1984 was the summer of the bathhouses, this was the summer of "the test." Early reports had indicated that the test was inaccurate and might have a rate of false positives as high as 30 percent. But although later reports confirmed that it was not infallible, they showed it to be highly specific for the AIDS antibody and highly sensitive. Preliminary surveys of the gay community had indicated that 50 to 70 percent of respondents would take the test. But as summer drew near, gay leaders and the gay press raised concerns about confidentiality. Anonymity was guaranteed at the test sites, but some people feared that if a physician was told and the results got into medical records, employers, government agencies (including the military), and insurance companies might get at them. "So if you're going to take the test, make sure you have insurance first—so they can't say you knew the results before you applied," Matthew Coles advised an audience at a church meeting about the test. "And keep your mouth shut."

Findings from early epidemiological projects suggest that about 50 percent of San Francisco's gay men will test antibody-positive, but estimates of how many of those men might go on to get AIDS or ARC vary tremendously. The most common guess is 25 percent, but Curran has observed that everyone infected might at some point within his or her life manifest diseases or disorders—perhaps cancers that have never been encountered—as a result of the exposure. Everyone exposed is potentially infectious.

The real problem with the test is this: if someone tests antibody-negative, the advice that will be offered him is Practice safe sex, lead a balanced life, stay healthy. If someone tests antibody-positive, the advice will be Practice safe sex, lead a balanced life, stay healthy, don't throw yourself out a window. "If there

were some anti-viral agents that worked, I might encourage patients to take the test," says Dr. James Campbell, of the Bay Area Physicians for Human Rights. "But right now all you are doing is engendering panic about getting AIDS." The test does have obvious value for a straight woman who had a lover who is either bisexual or an IV drug user, or who is considering becoming pregnant; for a gay man who believes he is more anxious not knowing whether he is antibody-positive than he would be knowing; and, of course, for donors and recipients of blood transfusions.

On the eve of the Fourth of July, at the Irwin Memorial Blood Bank, the only blood bank in the city, reserves of positive and negative type-O blood were almost depleted. The young man at the donor station joked wanly, "Come on in. We're having a double doughnut special." Brian McDonough, the executive director of the blood bank, simply shook his head. "People still have the preposterous idea that you can get AIDS from donating blood," he said.

When the CDC issued its first reports of AIDS cases associated with receiving blood transfusions, in December of 1982, the Irwin Blood Bank canceled its Bloodmobiles in predominantly gay neighborhoods. In January, after San Francisco's first such case was revealed, the blood bank started requesting that members of high-risk groups not give blood. By summer directors noticed a decline in donors, which they attributed to their request. But eventually donations fell so sharply that McDonough realized that something else had to be involved. "There was a Roper poll conducted, which indicated that twenty-six percent of the respondents associated donating blood with AIDS," he says. "We didn't believe the findings."

As more transfusion-associated AIDS cases surfaced in the city—by last August there had been fifteen, and 202 nationwide—the number of donors dwindled further. A widespread educational campaign by the news media and the introduction of antibody testing last spring have helped matters, but not enough. "Companies that used to sponsor Bloodmobiles have simply stopped," McDonough says. "They offer many explanations, but if you question them at all you discover that it is a fear of AIDS." (Hepatitis has never inspired such fears, although 2,000 to 3,000 people die each year from viral hepatitis contracted through blood transfusions.



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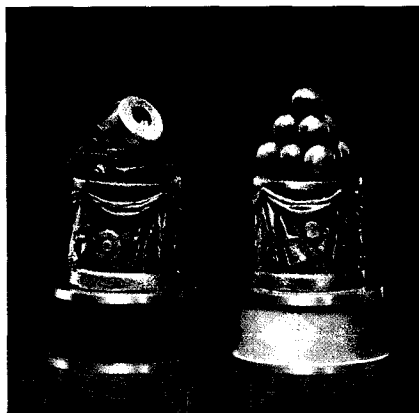
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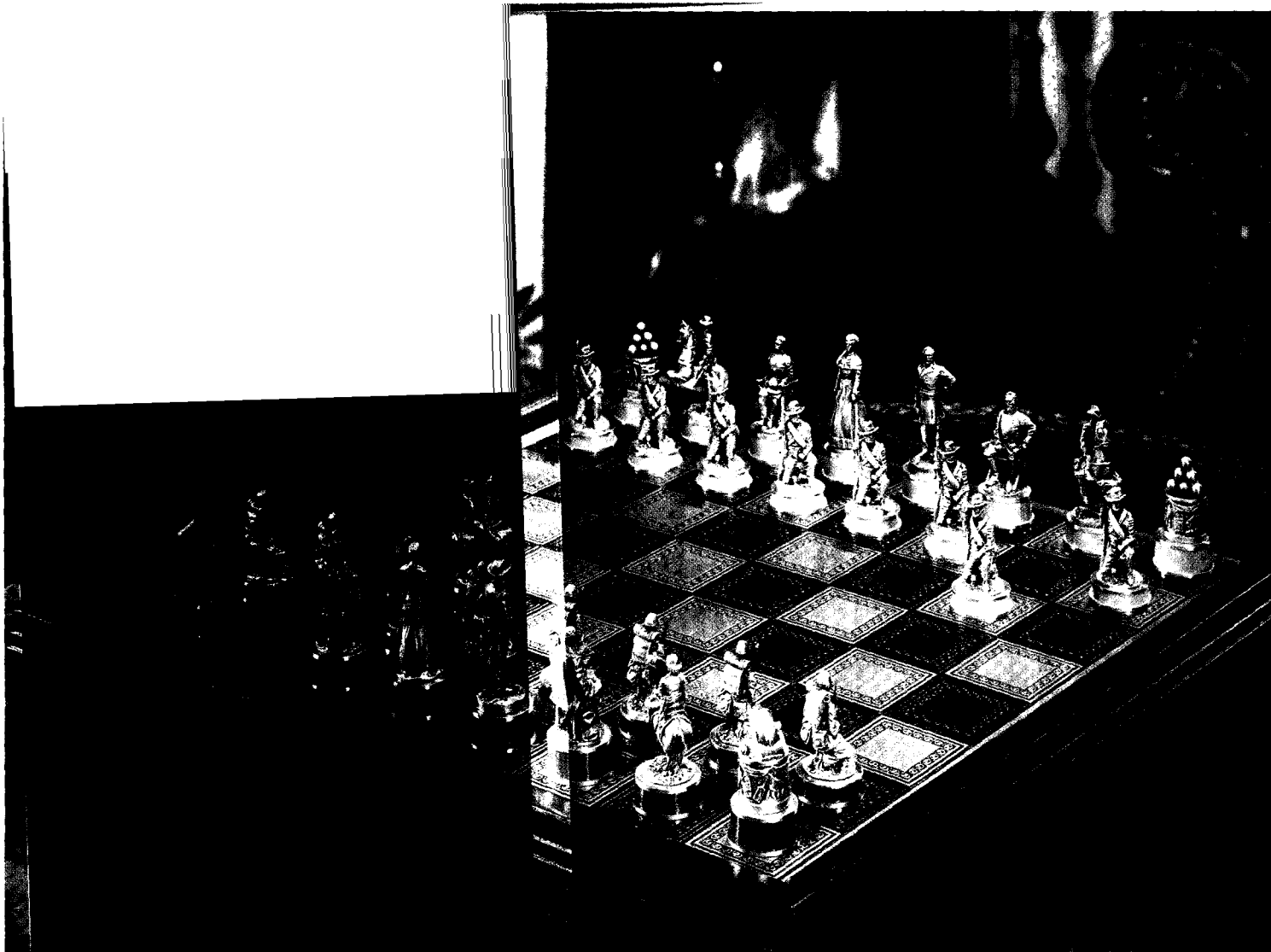


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The blood bank has encouraged autologous donations—patients put aside their own blood in the weeks prior to surgery—and last year initiated a “designated donor” program, in which the transfusion recipient has friends and relatives donate blood specifically for him. Until August of 1984 autologous and direct donors accounted for less than one percent of total donations to the Irwin Blood Bank. In the period from March to May of this year they accounted for 20 percent of all donations.

Now that the blood bank has initiated antibody testing, it has been able to determine that the antibody-positive rate in its donations is the same as at blood banks around the country in communities with insignificant numbers of gay members, which suggests that gays have complied with the request not to give blood. The blood bank is starting the difficult task of notifying donors who have tested antibody-positive, and it has applied for a city grant to follow up on and counsel those individuals.

This is not the blood bank's only notification challenge. Through records in the Department of Public Health it has determined the identity of forty-three AIDS patients who have donated blood in the past, involving 211 recipients. Of those recipients, 178 are living and four have contracted AIDS. Given the lengthy incubation period, more cases will probably come to light. “But I think we hit our lowest point in February,” McDonough says. “When you've infected a baby, a grandmother, and a nun—well, things don't get much worse.”

Transfusion recipients come into contact with the virus unknowingly. Before antibody testing was available, a group of people exposed themselves knowingly, daily, without having any idea whether they were putting themselves at risk. “Hospital workers were the guinea pigs,” Holly Smith says.

A year ago Julie Gerberding, a clinical instructor in medicine at SFGH, and the epidemiologist Andrew Moss began studying 100 workers in Wards 86 and 5-B—physicians, lab technicians, nurses, and pathologists—who have had intensive exposure to people with AIDS and ARC. Twenty-nine of the workers had had “mucocutaneous” accidents (splashing of a patient's urine or blood into an open cut, the mouth, or the eyes) or “needlestick” exposure (skin-breaking contact with a needle, syringe, or scalpel that had been used on an AIDS patient). Eight of the workers had had both sorts

of accidents. For some the incidents had occurred as early as 1981. The median length of time the workers had cared for AIDS patients was twenty-seven months. All of the participants in the study who tested antibody-positive were at high risk for other reasons (homosexuality or intravenous drug use).

Much the same results are emerging in preliminary findings from an ongoing study of 250 workers which Gerberding and Moss are also conducting. These workers include members of emergency-room teams and firemen, who might not have known that they were being exposed to AIDS, and whose interactions with the AIDS patients might have included mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. The findings from both studies are consistent with those from CDC studies and a study at one Boston hospital which were reported earlier this year in *The New England Journal of Medicine*. Health-care workers not in high-risk groups are not getting AIDS.

Even many health professionals who have read these reports remain wary of AIDS patients and uninformed about the disease. Gay physicians treat at least two thirds of the gay men in San Francisco, according to Steven Heilig, the coordinator of the AIDS Task Force of the San Francisco Medical Society. “The existence of the gay practices here has saved many doctors from having to get to learn about AIDS,” he says. “Legitimately they may refer a patient to a gay physician, or the SFGH clinic, where more AIDS patients have been seen. Frankly, many doctors are terrified of getting the disease. There is some homophobia, too, and consistent with the medical oath, somebody who feels any personal reservation about a patient would be compelled to refer him to someone else for treatment.” The Medical Society formed the AIDS Task Force this January and is now developing a referral network to direct AIDS patients to physicians willing to treat them.

The Medical Society has offered to present seminars on AIDS for health-care workers in all of the city's twenty hospitals. Only three hospitals have responded. Several nurses who volunteered to join the staff at Ward 5-B did so after observing the isolation and neglect of AIDS patients at other hospitals.

GAYLING GEE, the head nurse at the SFGH AIDS clinic, testified on July 3 at hearings by the Congressional Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Rela-

tions and Human Resources held in San Francisco to examine the federal and local governments' response to the AIDS epidemic. “We are offering patients the best that medicine now has to offer them, and we are offering them nothing,” she said. “We cannot do what we want to do and have been trained to do: heal the sick and the suffering.”

For this care that can bring temporary comfort but no lasting cure, young patients all over the country are expected to pay tens of thousands of dollars. In this city, again, patients are fortunate because the outpatient services greatly decrease inpatient costs and because the disability-compensation plans are better than those in most places.

A recent study of the first 9,000 AIDS cases in the United States, conducted by the CDC, estimated a cost of \$140,000 per patient. Dr. Philip Lee, the president of San Francisco's Health Commission, has conducted his own study on the cost of inpatient AIDS treatment at SFGH. During the nine-month period of his study patients had an average of 1.7 admissions, at a cost of roughly \$9,500 per admission. Given that the great majority of AIDS patients survive for between thirteen and eighteen months after diagnosis, Dr. Lee estimated that the total cost of lifetime in-hospital treatment for AIDS falls between \$25,000 and \$32,000 per patient in San Francisco—less than a fourth of the CDC estimate.

Under the best of circumstances, someone will be working when he learns he has the disease and will be covered by a company insurance policy for several months beyond when he must quit work (two thirds of AIDS patients can work until the final stages of their illness). Then, typically, the disabled employee will be offered private rates to maintain his coverage, which many AIDS patients cannot afford.

About a year ago AIDS was made a “presumptive disability” for Social Security. (Before it was, men had died waiting for their cases to be reviewed.) Social Security Insurance is based on need, can be granted almost immediately after a financial review, and brings in about \$450 a month. Social Security Assistance takes longer to process—about five months—and the waiting period begins only when a person stops working. The size of the monthly check depends on the amount an individual has paid into the system, and most twenty-five-year-olds haven't paid much. (Sixty-eight

percent of people with AIDS nationwide are between twenty and thirty-nine.) They may receive as little as a hundred dollars a month.

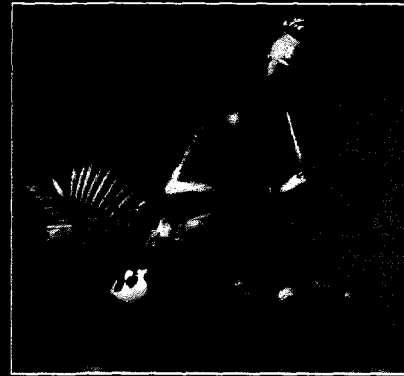
As the number of AIDS patients continues to grow, the issue of who will pay their medical costs is going to be divisive and will undoubtedly raise questions about the federal government's role in health care. Testifying before the congressional subcommittee on July 3, Lee said, "The AIDS victim must spend down his resources and then apply for public assistance. Only in the United States of America and South Africa, among all Western industrialized nations, would such a fate befall a sick patient with catastrophic health-care costs."

AIDS at least is a presumptive disability, but ARC is not. ARC patients face grimmer financial, and often psychosocial, problems, because they cannot avail themselves of certain benefits and service programs—like Shanti counseling and the AIDS Home Care Hospice Program—which are reserved for AIDS patients. In October of 1982 Richard Rector was living in Laguna Beach when he began to have swollen glands, night sweats, and recurrent fevers. He began losing weight and by December had gone from 170 to 98 pounds. The director of a public clinic gave Rector a series of tests and told him that he had AIDS and that he should return for periodic testing and observation.

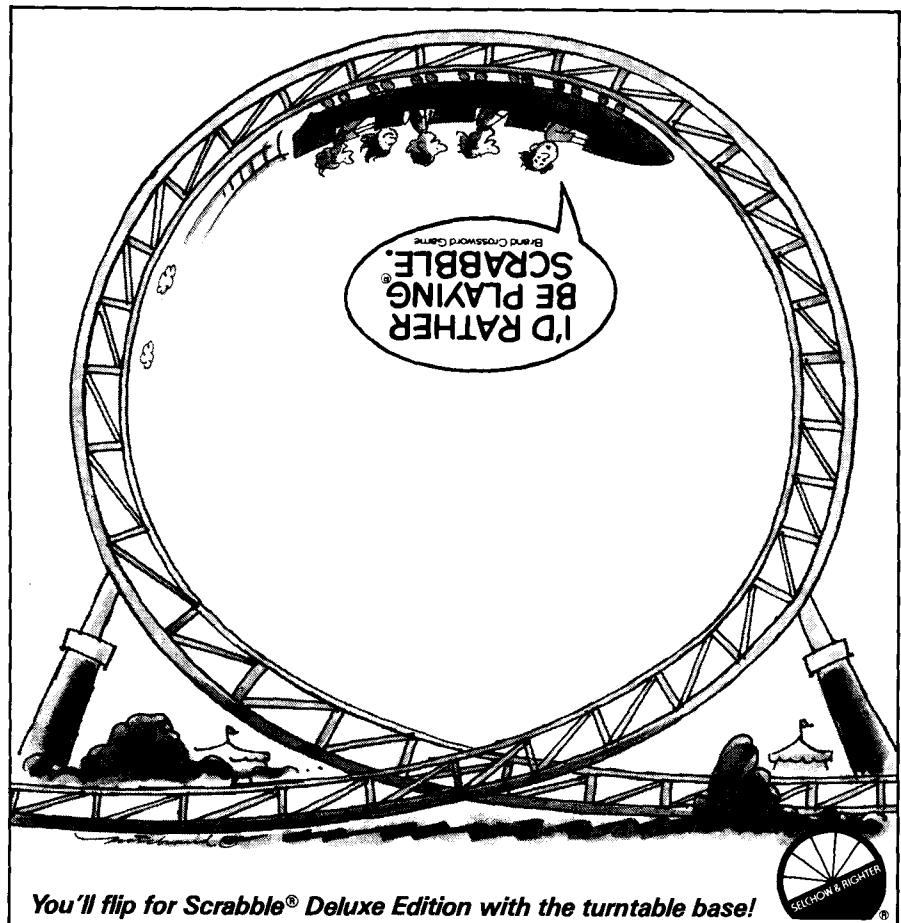
Rector went back to the clinic in February and after another series of tests was told that he had not AIDS but cytomegalovirus and amoebic dysentery. The lease on his apartment was running out, and he'd heard of good AIDS clinic programs in San Francisco, so he moved north.

Only at Ward 86 at SFGH did he receive an official diagnosis of ARC. In January of this year Rector had his first case of oral thrush. He applied to the county for, and received, General Assistance and State Disability Insurance, which in his case amounted to \$612 a month. Then he applied for MediCal. Six months later he hadn't heard a word. Finally, he telephoned and was told that an arbitrator was being called in because he had received an AIDS diagnosis in southern California and an ARC diagnosis in San Francisco. Rector asked Senator Milton Marks's office to intervene, and MediCal approval came through within a week. In February he applied for Social Security Insurance on the basis of an AIDS-related diagnosis. The

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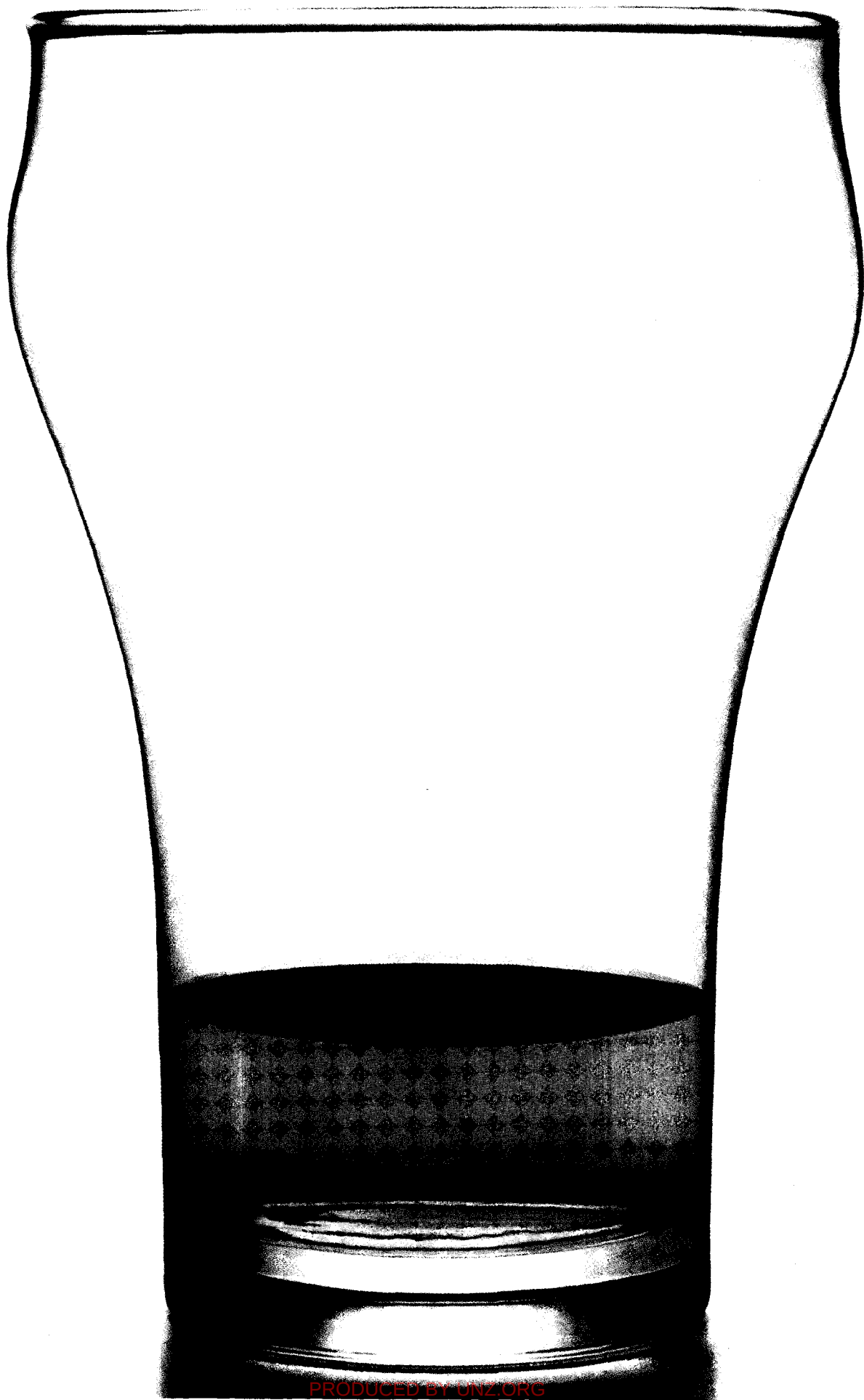
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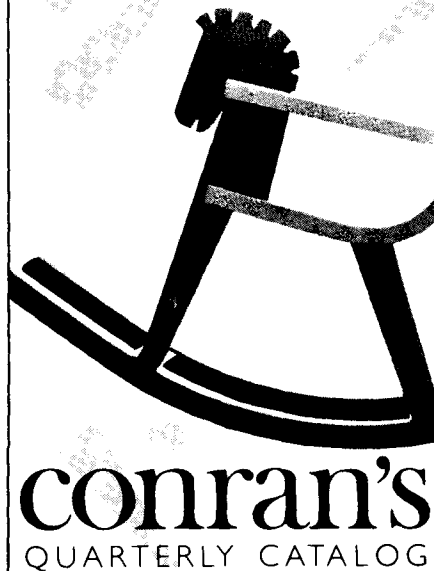
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Oakland office rejected his application and sent his records on to Washington. The records were sent back for additional medical information. The case is still pending.

Rector now weighs about 122 pounds and is having severe chest pains and headaches. The hardest thing about his situation, he says, is not knowing his medical status. "I've just had to give myself an AIDS diagnosis in my mind," he says. "I've made funeral arrangements and all the rest. I had to get on with the business of my life, and the uncertainty was holding me back." Rector's social life, as he describes it, is a common one among people with AIDS and ARC. He is celibate, and he has become especially close to a few friends, but many others have grown distant. "The minute you say you have ARC," he says, "everybody just *vanishes*."

THE OCCASIONAL news about federal funding or a new transfusion case will dominate the headlines for a week, but then the commotion dies down. Outside of SFGH, the Department of Health, and UCSF, the city seems like a place with twenty cases rather than 1,400. People are tired out by the AIDS news, and that includes many gays.

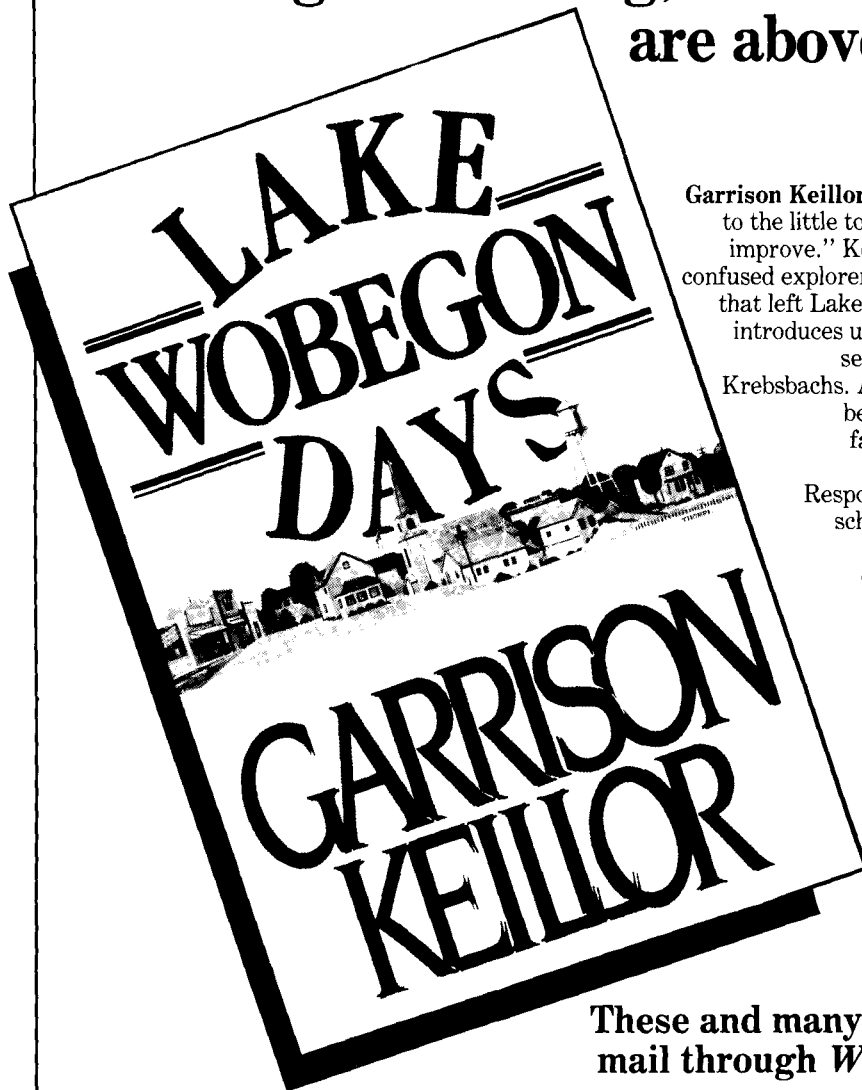
"You go to a party and everybody talks about AIDS until they just can't stand it anymore—but they go on thinking about it," says Randy Shilts, a reporter for *The San Francisco Chronicle*. Shilts is the only reporter in the country who covers AIDS full-time, filing story after story at his "death and despair desk." During the first ten months of 1984 the *Chronicle* ran four times as much AIDS coverage as *The New York Times* did. Explicit sex charts and guidelines have occasionally appeared beside the weather reports and the latest town gossip. "We had a new city editor from Chicago who, when he first got here, couldn't believe what was going into the paper," Shilts says, adding, "They drew the line at my rectal-gonorrhea chart."

These days, when gays do talk about AIDS, they talk about its imminent eruption in the heterosexual population. The conversation usually moves in one of four directions: I hope they learn from our experience and find out what safe sex is. The government will seriously begin to look for a cure. People will stop seeing it as a gay disease and stop blaming us. And, finally, The witch-hunt of gays is really going to begin.

Gay political clubs have held meet-

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ings about fears that a quarantine will be imposed. But even if officials were hell-bent on isolation, whom would they go after? Half of the members of the gay community may already have been infected, and the most contagious people are often asymptomatic. Ways to identify and isolate all antibody-positive individuals are being seriously discussed in small communities around the country but not here. Do gays really expect a big bus to pull up on the corner of Castro and Market? They have a ready answer: "They did it to the Japanese."

Although gays' fears occasionally seem paranoid, many of their worries are justified. The Community United Against Violence takes telephone reports of anti-gay violence. This past June reports to the CUAV doubled, from thirty to sixty incidents. In 1983, soon after AIDS was first widely publicized, in 25 percent of the reports assailants used epithets accusing gays of causing AIDS. Eileen Gillis is a co-director of the Lesbian-Gay Liaison Unit of San Francisco's Human Rights Commission, where she handles most cases of discrimination against gays. She investigated 123 complaints last year—up 40 percent from the previous year—and she attributes the increase to AIDS. Most cases involve firing. "Typically, someone gets fired for 'poor performance' as soon as the employer learns he has AIDS," Gillis says. Many complaints involve refusal of public services, mistreatment in hospitals, or employers' refusals to expedite insurance claims. "They know if they wait long enough," Gillis says, "the guy will be dead."

No gays are more concerned about such issues than the men with AIDS. A new political-advocacy group, the Mobilization Against AIDS, works closely with the People With AIDS Alliance. Men like Dan Turner, John Lorenzini, and Richard Rector all maintain that their political activism is their lifeline. That perception gives their efforts a special intensity. There is something nostalgic about their late-night planning sessions at the Café Flore, their faded jeans and vests, their knapsacks full of battered transcripts of congressional hearings about AIDS funding, their dizzying ability to cite any statistic, date, or name that will support their claim that the federal government is failing to respond adequately to the AIDS epidemic.

Vietnam is invoked again and again by the activists. Mortality statistics are compared with those from the war, the

cost of patient care with the cost of bombers. The real comparison, though unstated, is that people with AIDS feel like the veterans of an unpopular war that nobody wants to think about.

The men could be old Berkeley activists, with one critical difference. Many of them are ill, and at any given time only four or five of them may have the energy to man the phones or stuff envelopes. They change from their old clothes to their best suits to testify before congressional representatives, and no one would know to look at them that they are unwell. Of course, not all of the activists have AIDS or ARC. Jeoffin Roh, who has neither, came from Missoula, Montana, to help assemble a vast archive of documents and clippings about AIDS for Documentation of AIDS Information and Research. He is about to organize and preserve the archive by compiling it on a computer.

Such people do share something with activists of fifteen years ago: the certainty that the finest efforts are being made here in San Francisco, and that the rest of the country is looking to it as a model. Richard Rector has kept a diary since he became ill, which he has dedicated to the city of San Francisco. "I know that I would have committed suicide anywhere else," he says.

GAY MEN FLINCH when asked if anything good has come out of the AIDS crisis. AIDS will probably continue to be an unhappy determinant of every gay man's life for the rest of his life. As friends and lovers die, men grieve and worry constantly about their own health. They worry that if they go to a bar they will see someone attractive and be tempted to engage in activities they now know to be life-threatening. Should they embrace old friends on the street? If someone hasn't been around for a while, is he ill? Or dead? They must witness the satisfaction of those people who always warned them that their behavior was unnatural and would bring unnatural ends. They fear that co-workers will think that a head cold is the beginning of the disease. At thirty, men must worry about the sorts of things that men twice their age do—wills, powers of attorney, even funeral plans.

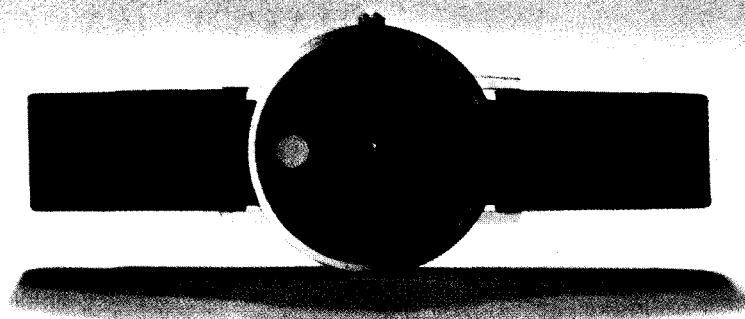
Harry Britt is the city's openly gay member of the Board of Supervisors. His closest friend is in Paris, receiving HPA-23 treatment. Britt has given a lot of thought to the impact of AIDS on his community. "There is so much reality-

denial in being gay," he says. "We create personalities we don't even recognize to present to the world. But AIDS has called us to reality. We've had to deal with dying. We are a more mature community, not a less sexual one. We're a more united community. When your enemies start dying of AIDS, you tend to forgive them. A straight person in this town might think about AIDS five minutes a day. A gay man has to think about it all day long."

But most straight people don't think about AIDS even five minutes a day. *California Living*, the *Chronicle's* Sunday supplement, recently devoted an entire issue to "San Francisco in the Year 2000." The word AIDS did not appear once in the description of an ever more yuppified city on the hills. Meanwhile, AIDS hotlines receive more and more calls each month from heterosexuals who believe they have symptoms. The AIDS Foundation is starting to place notices in newspapers for swinger businessmen, to print materials in Spanish, and to sponsor seminars at high schools and colleges—young people who experiment with drugs and same-sex sex are expected to be the next at-risk group.

Every week forums on AIDS feature some of the city's leading authorities, which is to say some of the world's leading authorities. But those meetings are often lightly attended, and even then exclusively by gays. San Franciscans, like New Yorkers, tell themselves that the problem will stay confined to the homosexual community, while the rest of the country tells itself that the problem will stay confined to San Francisco and New York. Epidemics don't work that way. Andrew Moss testified at the congressional subcommittee hearings, "In this generation . . . we have lost the collective memory of infectious disease jumping from one person to another—people dying first in ones and twos, then in dozens, then hundreds, now thousands." Despite the stunning provisions San Francisco has made for that eventuality, life here remains strangely unaffected by AIDS. Gay people are tired of talking about it but have no choice. Straight people don't want to hear about it but will soon have to. Everybody wishes it would go away—the most unlikely prospect of all in a small community in which upward of 30,000 people have already been infected and don't even know it.

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TRAVEL BARGAINS

(Excerpts from *The Dollars and Sense Guide to Italy's Budget Hotels*, Flamingo Press, \$10.95.)

BY JOHN HARRIS



Located on the sole of the boot of Italy, the **Pensione Pitti**, in Taranto (57 Via Aiuto), offers no-questions-asked service and a broken elevator to budget-conscious travelers. Keep in mind that sinks are showers and that the walls are dramatically thin—you'll be able to "listen in" as your neighbors talk in their sleep or floss their teeth. If you're staying at the Pitti, be sure to ask for a room on one of the lower floors, as the roof is part of a highway. Children and animals are welcome.

The **Ben Trovato**, in Parma (1 Via Nonno), is unique in a country filled with unique hotels. Entering through a courtyard littered with inner tubes and tractor parts, you soon find yourself in the depths of a great bargain. The exposed plumbing, wire beds, and pictures of Padre Pio and Pope John XXIII let you know immediately that the Ben Trovato is not just another "tourist trap." A special feature of the Ben Trovato is its windowless bathrooms without lights. You can buy candles inexpensively from Signor Molella, the owner, who also distributes towels.

Within sight of the Tiber, the **Albergo Terremoto** (99 Viale Borgia) offers its guests traditional Roman courtesy, with prices to match. The lobby is furnished with interesting pieces from the owner's living room and basement; each room has a view. The Terremoto is noted for its international clientele: ex-movie stars, economy-minded businessmen, and former bellboys with keys. Special features include bedless singles and mats on the roof. (Note: the Terremoto



does have its quirks; it's a good idea to take your bags with you whenever you leave your room.)

Was that a volcanic eruption at the foot of the street or a V-2 rocket landing in your window? Neither! It was the sound of a colorful Neapolitan riding his motorbike to meet a date at 4 A.M.! You'll hear a lot more from him and his friends when you stay at the **Hotel Malocchio** (4 Borgo Elkins). Every motorbike in Naples passes beneath its centrally located windows. Its proprietors, the Mazzarinis, are a friendly, accommodating couple, who rent rooms by the day, month, or hour. Only breakfast is served (*very* hard rolls and gray coffee in glasses), though the Mazzarinis have been threatening to begin a "full pension" plan that will include dinner and live entertainment.



The **Arnolfini**, in Venice (600009-A Calle Lungo), is perched above a stagnant backwater and commands a view of the nondescript, permanently flooded church of Santa Maria Angelicata. Rooms tend to be small, so be prepared to sleep with your feet in the hallway. But don't be put off by any inconveniences: the Arnolfini is less than an hour on foot from the Piazza di San Marco, and the nearby vaporetto stop is only a brief swim away.

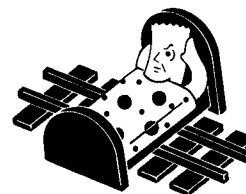
The **Casa Guido**, in Lucca (4290 Via Kissinger), is the best budget buy in this little-known city. Built on stilts in the thirteenth century, the Guido possesses late-medieval charms that are in fact early Renaissance, permitting its guests to return to an era that time would prefer to forget. The Guido is owned by the fun-loving Spontinis; they and their two energetic children play the centuries-old game of "bowls" until long after midnight in the Guido's historically sloping hallways.



The **Hotel Splendida**, in Bergamo (9 Via Largo), is one of the great tourist bargains in all of Italy. Its four tiny rooms look out on an airless courtyard that is filled with laundry all day and a barking dog all night. A single with bath rents for the same price as a double without a door: you'll have to decide on your priorities. (Open from October to March.)

The **Malatesta**, in Santa Margherita Ligure (63 Via Wlassics), is known throughout the Italian Riviera for its almost immaculate rooms and its home cooking, featuring Ligurian specialties. Signor Malatesta received his training as a cook at a nearby nursing home and orphanage, and his cuisine reflects the experience. A favorite repast is his "cold cuts *al burro*," followed by baked basil, with candy ice cream for dessert. You'll want to book a room well in advance, since the Malatesta is popular with budget-conscious Germans who are visiting relatives at the orphanage. *Buon appetito!*

The **Albergo Treno** (20 Via Lazzaroni) is conveniently located only a stone's throw away from the Stazione Centrale in Milan. The Treno's barred windows look out on the tracks of the busy terminal; the owner, Signora Sbrocchi (a brooding, moustachioed entity in black), has taped timetables by the beds, allowing guests to identify the trains that rumble past day and night. Signora Sbrocchi runs the Albergo with an iron hand, so you'll want to keep in mind that lights-out comes at 7 P.M. and check-out time is sunrise. □



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COURVOISIER

Political reality in the Middle East

WHY ISRAEL CAN'T TAKE "BOLD STEPS" FOR PEACE

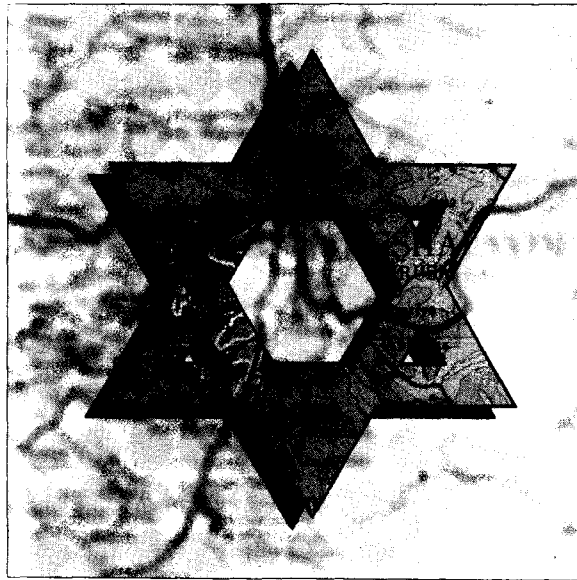
BY CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN

AFTER THE ISRAELI ELECTIONS of July, 1984, had resulted in a "hung" Knesset, a spokesman in Washington commented that the results were regrettable, because they did not show good prospects for the kind of "bold steps" that would be necessary to advance the "peace process."

As far as it concerned the immediate situation, the spokesman's comment was well founded. The government that eventually emerged from that hung Knesset—the Government of National Unity, with Shimon Peres as prime minister and Yitzhak Shamir (Menachem Begin's successor as Likud's leader) as deputy prime minister and foreign minister—is inherently incapable of taking the kind of bold steps the spokesman had in mind; it would disintegrate if it tried to take such steps, and perhaps even if it seemed to want to move in that general direction. But what is questionable is the implicit assumption that there must be *some* kind of electoral results possible in Israel that could lead to the taking of the desired bold steps: that is, to Israel's withdrawal from all or almost all of the West Bank, and the creation of some kind of Palestinian political entity there, perhaps in association with Jordan, linked to Israel by treaty.

Consider the electoral result that is most favorable in terms of the "territory for peace" idea (and that is at all likely). The most favorable result would be one that would lead to a coalition government formed by the Labour alignment with the two dovish parties to the left of it—Shinui and the Citizens' Rights Movement—as its partners.

What kind of bold steps could a government of that kind take? It could offer to Jordan *some* of the West Bank in exchange for a peace treaty. That is Labour's famous—and by now somewhat decrepit—Jordanian option. But it is a heavily hedged option as Labour has explained it in successive elections, including that of 1984. Jordan would not get back East Jerusalem: Jerusalem would remain a united city and the capital of Israel. Israel would also retain



its defensive line and the line of Jewish settlements all along the western bank of the River Jordan, with all the concomitant rights of military access across the general territory of the West Bank.

Labour's Jordanian option is in fact no more than the old Allon Plan, which was originally prepared by Yigal Allon (the deputy prime minister in Levi Eshkol's government in the aftermath of the Six-Day War) and which has been frequently revised since then. Now, the Allon Plan, in all versions and aspects, and under all labels, has been consistently and scornfully rejected by Jordan over more than fifteen years. (It has never been endorsed by the United States.) King Hussein, or any successor of Hussein's, would be running very serious risks if he concluded *any* peace treaty with Israel, even one that gave him back all Jordan's lost territory. But if he were to sign a treaty that left Israel in possession of all Jerusalem, and of the line along the western bank of the river, he would probably be committing suicide for himself and his dynasty—which he is unlikely to do.

It seems to be generally assumed, however, that a Labour coalition could be persuaded, or pressured, by the United States to "raise the ante" on its Jordanian option, as well as to most of the Arab population of the West Bank.

This, too, seems to me exceedingly unlikely. A Labour coalition would immediately be in dire trouble if the Jordanian option—even in its traditional form—were to enter the domain of practical politics and the actual handing over of parts of the West Bank to Arab control had to be debated in the Knesset and in the country. Likud and its allies of the even harder nationalist right and of the religious right would raise the flag of Masada. Labour and its allies would be branded as traitors for their willingness to abandon any part of the sacred soil of Judea and Samaria. The debate would become superheated and envenomed, with inci-

dents of violence and at least some of the overtones of incipient civil war.

Facing this tremendous emotional assault from the right, the Labour alignment—whatever may be true of its allies—would not be able to count on unity within its own ranks. Recent polls show that 30 percent of Labour supporters are now against giving up any part of Judea and Samaria. Thus the effort to implement the Jordanian option would precipitate not only a major political crisis in Israel generally but also an agonizing crisis within the Labour alignment.

Can it be seriously imagined that in those conditions any Labour-led coalition would take the bold step of *improving* on the Jordanian option from an Arab point of view? Would Labour and its allies offer to dismantle the defense line along the River Jordan, contrary to Labour's own repeated pledges, thus bringing down against the Labour coalition the weight of the Israel Defence Force establishment? Or would they offer to abandon East Jerusalem, with the Western Wall—the main remains of the Second Temple, sacred to all religious Jews and the prime focus of the national sentiment of secular Zionists also? Or to widen the Jordanian option so as to include the Palestine Liberation Organization?

It is rather clear that if Labour attempted any of those things, it (like Hussein) would be committing political suicide. The Jordanian option is really safe for Labour only as long as the Jordanians refuse to touch it. So the practical and cautious politicians who make up the Labour leadership seem likely to emphasize, as they have in the past, precisely those aspects of their Jordanian option that are most unpalatable to the Jordanians—thus prolonging an impasse that to Labour is vastly preferable, in terms of the internal politics of Israel, to the agonizing attempt at a negotiated solution.

It is true that future governments of Israel—of whatever complexion, but especially Labour—are likely to come under pressure, whether real or ostensible, from the United States to take those bold steps necessary for the pursuit of the peace process. The Reagan Plan, announced on September 1, 1982, envisioned “self-government by the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza, in association with Jordan.” That plan was immediately rejected by the Begin government, but the backers of the plan seem still to hope that it may yet be accepted by a successor Israeli government, under a suitable degree of pressure. No government with Likud in it could give in to such pressure without making nonsense of Likud's whole tradition and deepest commitment. But even a Labour government is likely to prefer resistance to such U.S. pressure—resistance with the backing of a great majority in Israel—to the grisly internal consequences likely to follow the taking of those bold steps.

Neither the Jordanian option nor the Reagan Plan nor any variant of these has the capacity for coming to fruition. (Some cynical observers of the internal political situation in Israel believe, however, that Mr. Peres may, perhaps be-

fore the end of this year, make a high-profile move in the ostensible direction of “territory for peace,” in order to force the resignation of his Likud colleagues from government, thus annulling the consequences of the agreement to allow Likud to accede to the premiership two years after the formation of the Government of National Unity. That seems a rather startling hypothesis, but even if well founded, it does not invalidate the analysis above. Those who attribute such an intent to Mr. Peres do not suppose that he would seriously persist with “territory for peace”—certainly not beyond Allon Plan limits—once he had attained his internal political purpose. Yet even a feint in that direction would be an exceptionally high-risk exercise in Machiavellianism. And then again, perhaps Mr. Peres is not like that at all.)

BUT SUPPOSE—*PER IMPOSSIBILE*—THAT SOME VARIANT of the Reagan Plan did come to pass. Let us take one of the rosiest possible hypotheses where the peace process is concerned. Let us suppose that the rather flickering rapprochement of 1983 between Hussein and Yasser Arafat consolidates itself, as appeared to be happening in the first half of 1985. On February 23 the text of a settlement between Hussein and Arafat was released in Amman. This agreement could scarcely be the basis for an agreement between the parties and Israel. It demands (among other things) “termination of Israeli occupation of the occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem,” and “total withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967 for comprehensive peace as established in United Nations and Security Council resolutions.” It contains no reference to recognition of Israel within its pre-June, 1967, boundaries, and uses language that seems incompatible with such recognition: “Palestinians will exercise their inalienable right of self-determination. . . .” The document also calls for the inclusion in any peace conference (along with the five permanent members of the Security Council and “the parties to the conflict”) of “the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.”

On the face of it, this is not a very promising peace overture. However, President Hosni Mubarak's follow-up call for direct negotiations, in the United States, between Israel and a “joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation” (without naming the PLO as a participant) was distinctly more interesting to Israel, and met with a cautiously positive response from Shimon Peres. In the first half of 1985 Secretary of State Shultz appeared moderately hopeful about the possibilities for negotiation, especially in the light of various encouraging statements from Hussein. Potential Palestinian negotiators were being designated and were under consideration by the State Department.

Let us suppose that the Hussein-Arafat rapprochement, as followed up by Mubarak, leads to the most favorable of possible results: Arafat publicly and explicitly announces his willingness to recognize Israel within its pre-June,

1967, limits (subject to a few minor variations), and Israel then accepts Arafat's PLO as a partner, along with Jordan, in direct negotiations. Hussein and Arafat are ready to cooperate on the basis of the Reagan Plan, which thus has the backing of the present leader of "the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people." Israel is ready to withdraw to its pre-June, 1967, frontiers (with minor variations) in exchange for recognition, within these frontiers, by the PLO and Jordan.

We are piling improbability on staggering improbability here, but not any more than certain respected editorial writers are doing all the time.

On this basis Israel hands over almost the whole of the West Bank to some kind of Hashemite-Arafat federation or confederation (we will consider the alternative of a full-fledged Palestinian state later). By this time Israel has given up a lot of territory, in exchange for peace. How much peace will Israel actually have gotten in exchange for that territory?

Peace, presumably, with Arafat and Hussein. But how much peace will Arafat and Hussein get, or have in their gift? Can anyone suppose that all, or almost all, of the PLO would go along with that deal, or any deal? The deal would likely be denounced, with the usual vehemence, both by the left-wing factions of the PLO and by the Syrian-controlled factions, and all those factions might well gain new adherents, through further defections from Arafat's Fatah. Syria, orchestrating its PLO factions with its usual ruthless skill, would be likely to make life very hot (by the methods it has successfully used in Lebanon) on the West Bank, and perhaps also in Jordan, for Arafat, Hussein, and their friends—even if their combined friends were in a majority in the territory, as they might well be. (Majorities and minorities are not such important concepts in this context as some Western commentators tend to assume.) In these conditions the territories formerly occupied by Israel—and evacuated in exchange for peace—would likely become a happy hunting ground for fedayeen (Arab guerrilla) activity directed against all the parties to the detested treaty. The chief Arab parties might well not survive, and the treaty might perish with them. Nor would the ensuing conditions be at all preferable, from the point of view of West Bank Arabs, to conditions under Israeli rule.

It is true that the moderate Arab states—Egypt and Saudi Arabia—would be likely to approve the "territory for peace" arrangements described, but on one condition: that the territories transferred by Israel to Arab rule included East Jerusalem. Failing that, the deal would be denounced by virtually the whole Arab and Moslem world. And it is as certain as anything can be that the state of Israel will not give up any part of its capital, Jerusalem, in exchange for anything at all, even peace.

The option of a Palestinian state on the West Bank has also to be considered. Since this option is firmly rejected by both main parties in Israel, as well as by most of the smaller parties and by the great majority of the population of Israel, the Palestinian state is even less likely, if

that is possible, to come to fruition than the Jordanian option.

Still, the idea of the Palestinian state has to be considered, since it has the backing, or apparent backing, of the Arab states, even the moderate ones. It is central to the revised Fahd plan, as endorsed by the second Fez summit, in September, 1982, after the expulsion of the PLO from Beirut, and by many resolutions of the General Assembly.

The Palestinian state is expected—both by its advocates and by its opponents—to be under some form of control by the PLO, "the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," as the PLO was defined by the Arab summit at Rabat in 1974 and in every major communiqué from the Arab states since then. Almost all Israelis would regard such a state as an immediate threat to the security of their own state and a longer-term threat to its existence. They believe that the PLO would accept the mini-state on the West Bank as a step in the direction of its real objective, which remains all of Palestine. They also believe that the PLO would use that mini-state as a base for the destabilization of both Jordan and Israel, with Jordan first on the list. On that last point King Hussein is known to be in agreement. However, a number of distinguished and influential outside observers believe that Israeli fears on the point are illusory and that a Palestinian state could peacefully and happily coexist with an Israel withdrawn to the frontiers it had before June, 1967. They point—as Noam Chomsky does repeatedly in *The Fateful Triangle*—to a number of statements permitting that inference, made by Arafat and some of his associates, generally in Western contexts. As against all that, Israelis point to at least an equal number of PLO statements to a contrary effect—usually in Arabic and some also by Arafat—and to the PLO's constitution, the Palestinian National Covenant, which is clearly incompatible with the existence of the Jewish state.

It is probably unnecessary to pay much attention to either set of statements. It is fairly obvious that in the highly unlikely event of a deal between Israel and the PLO over the West Bank, the PLO would be hopelessly split. Indeed, it is split already. The left-wing factions and the Syrian-controlled factions would launch murderous attacks on the "traitors" (as in the Hussein-Arafat scenario). The Palestinian state, long before it could destabilize others, would be likely to lose all stability itself. The Palestinian state, if ever founded, would be apt to collapse almost immediately. But it is altogether unlikely ever to be founded.

IT SEEMS TO FOLLOW THAT EXCHANGING TERRITORY for peace—attractive as that concept is—is not a feasible option for the West Bank. It looks as if Israel will remain in control of the West Bank for a long time. Many Israelis—and others—view that prospect with deep misgivings, and they are quite right to do so. But, misgivings or not, that seems to be the prospect that is actually there.

The really pressing questions now concern not the fu-

ture of the territories but the future of their Arab inhabitants. In the ten years after June of 1967 the Open Bridges policy and Israel's little-heralded "adversarial partnership" with Jordan (in Ian Lustick's phrase) led to a kind of working arrangement on the West Bank whereby the Arab inhabitants were left as far as possible to their own devices and allowed to continue to feel part of the Arab world. This arrangement—inspired mainly by Moshe Dayan—allowed the Arab population to develop peacefully and to attain a considerable degree of prosperity. Civil administration and Arab education on the West Bank remained generally under Jordanian control, and the Jordanian dinar remained legal tender on the West Bank.

In the following years, especially from 1980 on, the Likud pressure for augmenting Jewish settlements (often close to densely populated Arab areas), combined with the manipulations of Begin-style autonomy, made for increased Arab unrest and some violence. The old working arrangement, amounting to a kind of tacit condominium between Israel and Jordan over the West Bank, was strained by these developments but did not collapse.

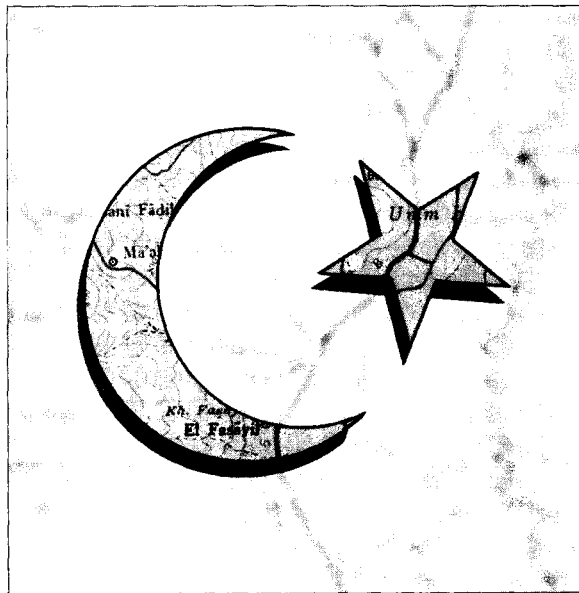
There was, moreover, an evident and apparently growing tendency on the far right of the Israeli political spectrum to deliberately provoke the West Bank Arabs, in the apparent hope of inflaming violence, which would have to be met by Israeli repression, in a cycle that could eventually force the Arab population out.

Currently, the living symbol of this tendency is the right-wing fanatic Rabbi Meir Kahane, whose election to the Knesset in July of 1984 horrified many Israelis (including some rabbis) and alarmed the Arabs, both of the West Bank and of Israel itself. Rabbi Kahane is the author of a work called *They Must Go*, and he has vowed to go on making trouble until they do. Although Rabbi Kahane was the only member of his group, Kach, to be elected, support for his approach is almost certainly wider than the 20,000 or so citizens whose votes are needed to elect or return a member of the Knesset. At least some among the ultra-nationalist right, on the religious right, and on the right wing of Likud itself approve of his aims, if not of his style and all his methods. And voting results in July of 1984 seemed to show that there is more support for such ideas among serving Israeli soldiers than among the population at large.

President Chaim Herzog's personal ostracism of Kahane, and his appeals for toleration and against racism, have the support of most of the press and of that part of the political spectrum which runs from the left through the center to what have been called the "moderate hawks,"

well represented on this matter by the leader of Likud, Yitzhak Shamir. That is a majority of Israeli society. But the minority that remains—to the right of the right-of-center—is both significant in numbers and formidable in its determination and dynamism. If that minority cannot be adequately controlled by the state, there is a serious danger that it may progress in the direction it desires. The interaction of Jewish and Arab extremists could endanger the continuing presence on the West Bank of its Arab population.

By a kind of paradox, the main effect of the unremitting international efforts to bring about the withdrawal of Israel from the West Bank is probably to speed up that sinister interaction and to increase the danger to the territory's Arab population. Israel's extremists are long conditioned to respond to such pressure by the creation of new facts, while Arab resistance to any such new facts is likely to be encouraged by the thought that, after all, on this matter the Arabs have world opinion on their side. In the event of a catastrophe, sympathetic world opinion—though it will be copious—is likely to be of no more use to the losers than it has been in any of the



long series of Palestinian disasters.

Those in the West who argue that the effort to rule over large numbers of Arabs may eventually destroy Israel itself might do well to note that Meir Kahane is making the same point, while drawing from it an inference radically different from what the Western critics have in mind.

UNEASE IN ZION SEEMS, FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF 1985, destined to be the condition of Israelis for some considerable time to come. The idea that Israel can withdraw to its pre-June, 1967, territory and live there behind secure and recognized frontiers, in peace with all its neighbors, is an agreeable international pipe dream. The reality is that Israel will stay on the West Bank, where its presence will continue to be challenged, from within and from without. And Israel's contested presence, the various forms of challenge to it, and responses to the challenges are likely to deepen, at least for a time, the divisions already obvious in Israeli society. (The 1984 elections are ominous in that regard. Labour had hoped to capture disillusioned Likud voters, but failed. There *were* disillusioned Likud voters, but they went everywhere except to Labour and its allies. The aversion of Oriental—or Sephardic—voters to Labour now seems quasi-permanent.)

There are those who will agree with much of my analysis

regarding what is likely to happen but who would want me to add some kind of condemnation of Israel, for its perversity and folly in failing to take the necessary bold steps in pursuit of the peace process.

I can't do that, because I don't see how I can condemn people for failing to do things that I think they actually *can't* do.

The reasons for Israel's incapacity to abandon all the territory acquired in the 1967 war are bound up with the two great *raisons d'être* of Zionism: the Jewish state and the Return.

Basic to the idea of the Jewish state was the need for Jews to ensure the security of Jews, Gentiles having proved, at so many times and in so many places, that they could not be trusted in that matter. So secure frontiers are a basic requirement of the Jewish state. The pre-June, 1967, frontier—coming to within a few miles of the coast and Tel Aviv—was felt by almost all Israelis to be highly insecure. In contrast, the line of the Jordan, with the escarpment to the west of it, was judged ideal for defensive purposes by the planners of the Israel Defence Force.

Outsiders advised that Israel did not need such strong defense against the weak Arab threat, and that in any case Israel would do better to trust to Arab good will, which it would acquire by the surrender of all the occupied territories. On such a matter Israelis generally preferred the advice of their own soldiers to that of outsiders. This preference followed inescapably from the whole ideology of the Jewish state, of Zionism, and of the history of Israel. And Israelis knew that Arab good will was not procurable for the Jewish state. In their more conciliatory utterances—especially to Western audiences—Arab spokesmen rejected the idea of driving the Jews into the sea and allowed them (ostensibly at least) some kind of role in the future “secular and democratic Palestine” of the Palestinian National Covenant. But the Jewish state, that “racist” entity, was anathema, whatever its boundaries. So those responsible for the security of the Jewish state were governed by military considerations alone, and not by the vain pursuit of unattainable good will.

As for the Return, the idea of a Jewish state elsewhere than in Palestine was considered many times in the earlier history of Zionism. It was attractive to some Westernized, secular Jews. But it was decisively rejected, in 1903–1905, by Zionists of the Russian Empire who, though mostly of secular consciousness, were deeply influenced by the Jewish religious tradition. For them—and for Zionists generally henceforward—the only goal was Palestine. The Bible was the mandate, as the “secular” Ben-Gurion told the Peel Commission in 1937, and Jerusalem was the magnet. If that was so in a complex and deep-down way for the secularized and partly Westernized Russians, it was so in a quite simple and down-to-earth way for most of the non-secularized and non-Western immigrants from the Moslem lands. For them, this land was their inheritance, by right of Revelation, and Jerusalem was its predestined capital.

The Jews had recovered Jerusalem, after nearly two

thousand years, through a train of efforts and events so strange and unprecedented as to appear to some almost miraculous and to others literally miraculous. To expect the Jews, having thus again come into possession of Jerusalem, to hand over the Old City, with the Western Wall, to an Arab power, or to an international authority, is to expect what cannot be. To ask Israel to give up all or most of Judea and Samaria is to ask for the unlikely; to ask Israel to hand over the heart of Jerusalem is to ask for the impossible.

So the felt needs of the Jewish state and the animating concept of the Return pose what seem to be impenetrable barriers to Israel's voluntarily accepting the kind of settlement that international opinion almost universally calls for on the West Bank.

THAT THOSE THINGS ARE SO, AS A MATTER OF FACT, would be hard to deny, though no doubt the thing can be done. But some, who accept that these things are so—or more or less so—still passionately urge that *they ought not to be so*. The Jewish state and the Return may dominate the situation on the West Bank—and in Gaza and in Israel itself—for today and, perhaps, tomorrow. But they have no right (it is argued) to dominate it. Both are illegitimate concepts. The Jewish state is a racist concept. The Return is a mystical concept—that is to say, superstitious and false. These concepts, being illegitimate, have no right to prevail over a legitimate, rational, and humane *principle*: that of the consent of the governed.

I should like here to take a brief look at the three principles that argument opposes and embraces.

“The Jewish state is a racist concept.” Yes, in a way. It is racist to the extent that all nationalism is racist, which is a large extent. Simone Weil held that racism and nationalism were essentially the same thing, racism being simply “a more romantic version of nationalism.” The Jewish state is the embodiment and creation of Jewish nationalism. And modern Jewish nationalism was very largely a response to European nationalisms, which increasingly rejected Jews—increasingly on racist principles—as part of the nations concerned. The founders of Zionism were almost all rejected assimilationists. Their logic was clear-cut: Since the existing states say we don't belong to them, very well, we must have a state of our own.

All nationalism is exclusive, quietly so or noisily. Most nation-states preserve their national character by stringent immigration controls, according to criteria the most important of which (being of a nationalist, racist character) generally remain implicit. The Jewish state is like most other states in its determination to preserve its national character, as determined by itself, through exclusive processes. Where the Jewish state is unusual, and in part unique, is through the following elements:

(a) The Jewish state did not come into being, as the European states did, through a long and gradual process, on the same territory, involving slow exclusions, inclusions,

and accretions. The Jewish state was created through an unprecedented convergence of scattered people on a *former* national territory, and it crystallized at an amazing speed: from a political dream to a state in less than seventy years.

(b) Since the creation of the Jewish state the criterion of nationality has become a specifically religious one. Now, insofar as racial characteristics are important to racism—and I think they are important—this criterion actually operates *against* racism. Before 1948 there were those in Israel's predominantly Ashkenazi population who would have liked to keep out the Oriental Jews, primarily on racial grounds. But the criterion of admission was in fact a religious one, and so the Oriental Jews qualified.

(c) All nationalisms exclude, but the people whom it was most important for the Jewish state to exclude, for the sake of its own survival, were its fated enemies, the bulk of the previous settled population in the land of Israel. The present state of Israel, for example, could not admit to citizenship the Arabs of the West Bank without preparing the destruction of the Jewish state, at least—which Israel, being (in all essentials) the Jewish state, is not likely to do.

I don't think you can reasonably say that the idea of the Jewish state is *inherently* racist, and therefore illegitimate, unless you also condemn all other nationalisms, including Arab nationalism, for their exclusivities: quite a reasonable proposition, but one that would stigmatize all states and most of the population of the globe.

The relation of the Jewish state to Palestine and to its Arab population I shall consider in relation to the two interrelated principles, that of the right of Return and the principle of consent of the governed.

THE IDEA THAT THE RIGHT OF THE JEWS TO RETURN to Palestine transcends the will of the majority of the settled population of the area is certainly basically a religious one (or a religious-national one), whatever secular forms it may from time to time assume.

Does the fact that the right of Return is basically a religious idea make it *ipso facto* illegitimate?

Probably only the tougher-minded within the secularist tradition would answer that question with an unhesitating yes. But *some* kind of yes is implicit in the whole tradition of Western Europe and North America since the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. The post-Enlightenment tradition assumes the separation of religion from the political process. The notion that a *religious* attachment justifies a *political* claim is inherently repugnant to what has been the dominant intellectual tradition in the West for nearly a quarter of a millennium. The question is, however, whether the dominant intellectual tradition in the West also applies to the Middle East.

On the surface, it might seem to. The rhetoric of the Arab-Israeli debate has been almost entirely the rhetoric of the Western Enlightenment tradition. It is a rhetoric that

has extremely high international prestige *as* rhetoric, largely owing to the phenomenal success of the three great Western revolutions inspired by it—English, American, and French—and to the mimicry of much of it by the Soviet Union (as in Stalin's 1936 constitution). The United Nations Charter is full of Enlightenment ideas, and United Nations debates are generally conducted in terms of an assumed consensus of commitment to these ideas.

The Arab case against Israel is most definitely expressed in terms of that tradition. For example, the Palestinian state envisioned in the Palestinian National Covenant of 1968 would be, in theory, "a secular and democratic state." Because the governing code of debate is based on the Western Enlightenment value system, this puts the Arab states (which support the principle of consent of the governed) permanently in the right, and Israel (with its archaic right of Return and its Jewish state) permanently in the wrong.

But rhetoric and reality are far apart here. Political practice based on Enlightenment values—the rule of law, freedom of expression, and political democracy—exceeds the boundaries of the West only in a few exceptional cases, and none of them are in the Middle East, with the ironic exception of Israel itself, in its internal political arrangements among Jews. If there were today a Palestinian state, and if it were indeed a democratic state, it would be unique in the Arab world (and unusual in the world outside the West). In practice the rulers of the region assume and enforce the consent of those they govern, as the rulers of the region have done from time immemorial, without curiosity as to the wishes of the governed. The rule of law and freedom of expression are unknown, as they have been in the past. Secularity is a matter for small elites—some of them, as religious minorities, justifying their own dominance, as the Alawis of Syria do, in terms of secular and progressive ideas. In any case, throughout the Islamic world the rise of Moslem fundamentalism since 1980 has increasingly challenged the secular elites.

Islam, even more than any other of the great religions, denies the existence of the dichotomy, posited by the Western Enlightenment, between religious and political life. Those representing (or at any rate speaking on behalf of) Moslem populations who appeal to Enlightenment ideas are engaging in double-talk, masking the realities of what is fundamentally, on both sides, a religious-nationalist cultural conflict. It is a conflict, moreover, that is unlikely to be resolved by appeal to an umpire from the world of the Enlightenment.

The presiding symbol is that of Jerusalem. The Jewish claim to Jerusalem is not a matter of rational argument; nor is the Moslem claim; nor will the two claims be reconciled, or either side appeased, by arbitration; nor will either accept the counting of heads as decisive, unless it works in that side's own favor.

The Jews today rule in Jerusalem for the same *material* reason as the British ruled before them, and the Ottoman Turks before them, and all the others before them, back to



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Caliph Omar and beyond—because they conquered the place. But the *attachment* of the Jews to the city is older and deeper than that of any of its previous conquerors.

It is argued that conquest as a claim to rule, though very widely acceptable up to 1914–1918, is no longer acceptable since the Fourteen Points, the Atlantic Charter, and the Charter of the United Nations. But the Jewish and the Moslem claims to Jerusalem are anterior to those documents by many centuries and will not be resolved by reference to the modern documents, vastly inferior as these are in authority and in emotional power and in other respects to the Bible and the Koran.

The right of Return is based on the Bible and contested (by implication) in the Koran. When the Koran is defeated—for the time being, at least—the appeal goes out to the post-Christian world, in terms of the post-Christian ideology of the Enlightenment, under the slogan of “consent of the governed.” But any realities pertaining to that slogan belong to the world appealed to, not the world that appeals.

I know well that the line of thought traced above will be ill received by many Westerners—both friendly and unfriendly to Israel—and also by many people in Israel itself. The Jews of the Diaspora played a large part in the development and diffusion of Enlightenment ideas, gloried in them, and benefited from them, for a time. Israelis of European origin inherit a value system largely drawn from the European Enlightenment. Indeed, this inheritance is one of the sources of the great internal malaise of Israel. Most of the Oriental Jews have no such inheritance. They tend to find it more or less incomprehensible, and irrelevant or even noxious to Israel’s needs in its actual besieged condition.

I’m afraid—and there are grounds for fear—that the Orientals have a point. The Western Enlightenment and the idea of the Return don’t fit together; they only rub together uneasily. The idea of the Return comes out of that older world which the *philosophes* rejected, and the Return took shape under unimaginably harsher necessities than any that had ever impinged on the *philosophes*.

I BELIEVE THAT ISRAEL CANNOT BE OTHER THAN WHAT it is—in the basic sense that Israel is not free to be other than the Jewish state in Palestine, and that the Jewish state, once in possession of Jerusalem, is not capable of relinquishing that city.

The Moslem world is also not free to be other than what it is, and is certainly incapable of acquiescing, openly, fully, and voluntarily, in a Jewish state in Palestine with Arab subjects and its capital in Jerusalem.

It seems to follow that the siege of Israel will continue, in some form, into an indefinite future. That is not necessarily or immediately as tragic a statement as it may sound. In certain conditions the siege could become—for a period, at least—a largely latent and almost metaphorical affair. Israel could find itself at peace, in one way or another,

with all its neighbors. The peace with Egypt held during the 1982 war in Lebanon. There has been a de facto peace, with no fedayeen, between Jordan and Israel since 1973; this held even in 1982. Israel’s greatest problem among its Arab neighbors is Syria, with its Soviet backing and its presence and proliferating influence in Lebanon.

Yet a tacit accommodation, even with Syria, is possible, as was proved in 1976, over Lebanon. The later breakdown of that arrangement was partly owing to the overweening and baroque ambition of Ariel Sharon. But it was also owing, perhaps in larger part, to a stipulation introduced by Israel into the tacit agreement of 1976 between itself and Syria. This was the stipulation that Syrian authority should not extend to Lebanon’s far south and the border with Israel. This stipulation led to the development of “Fatahland,” in southern Lebanon, beyond Syria’s control—and so to the conditions that provided the occasion, if not all the reasons, for Israel’s intervention in 1982.

It appears that there was a school of thought in Israel in 1976 that opposed the stipulation as to the extent of Syria’s authority in Lebanon. That school seems to have been vindicated by events. It seems, therefore, within the bounds of possibility that a new and less restrictive tacit arrangement could be reached with Syria over Lebanon, with a certain “territory for peace” content. One version of such an arrangement could include the following:

(a) Israel would withdraw its troops from all of Lebanon, without insisting—as once it did—on Syria’s also withdrawing. Israel has now in fact withdrawn from Lebanon *almost* completely, the exception being Israel’s continued support for the Christian-officered South Lebanon Army on Lebanon’s border with Israel. The abandonment of that support is almost certainly a necessary pre-condition for any overall arrangement between Israel and Syria.

(b) Israel would agree secretly to Syria’s hegemony over all Lebanon, to be assured by means of Syria’s own Machiavellian devising.

(c) Syria would undertake to see that there would be no PLO activity in Lebanon other than by forces of that name under complete Syrian control, and that those forces would not take part in any fedayeen activity.

(d) Syria would guarantee the safety of the Maronite Christians in their own areas as well as the safety of those elements on Israel’s border who have cooperated with Israel.

And finally:

(e) If these arrangements held and peace prevailed over a stipulated period, Syria would get back the Golan Heights, demilitarized.

If some such arrangement could eventually be worked out with Syria—building on the 1976 precedent—Israel would then at last have peace with all its neighboring states: peace by treaty with Egypt, peace by tacit understanding with Jordan (as discussed below) and Syria and, through Syria, with Lebanon.

That seems the nearest thing to a comprehensive Middle Eastern settlement that is actually available in the real world.

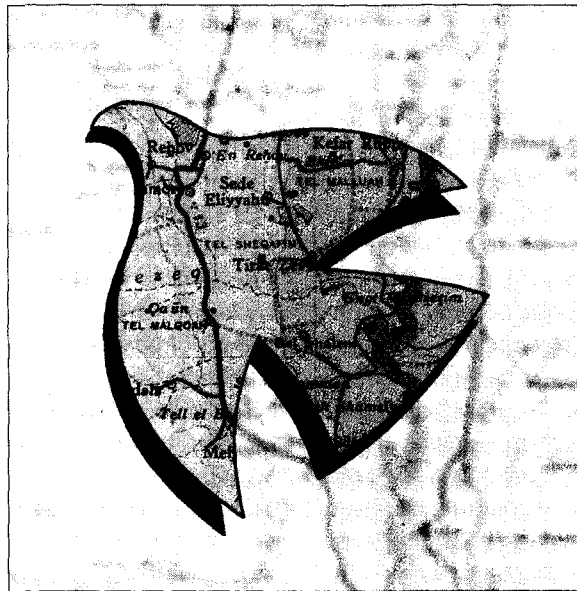
EVEN SO, THE PROBLEM OF THE WEST BANK AND OF Israel's incapacity to get out of it will remain. There, the best that can realistically be hoped for—and even this cannot be taken for granted—is a return to the noninterventionist attitudes of the Dayan years. That step is made more difficult by the existence of the Begin settlements, which are not going to be uprooted. But at least there could be a return to the policy of no new settlements near centers of Arab population, and even an enhancement of the famous adversarial partnership with Jordan. There could be—as there was under Dayan—and was not under Begin—a regime based on the principles of minimal interference and the avoidance of provocation. Teddy Kollek as mayor of Jerusalem has shown that even under siege conditions a potentially hostile population can be treated with consideration and respect, and that this policy can be rewarding for all concerned. Unfortunately, there are not many like Teddy Kollek around, inside or outside Israel. But the example is there, and Shimon Peres is known to admire the Kollek achievement.

"There is no Jordanian option," a Jordanian minister has said, "but there is a Jordanian *role*." That sounds like a hint. It seems possible that some kind of *tacit* agreement could be reached (or, rather, enhanced) with Jordan over certain areas of the West Bank, resembling in some respects the Allon Plan—and indeed the Reagan Plan—but reached without fanfare or the signature of any treaty.

Both the situation and the mood of Israel in the wake of the Lebanon war and the retreat from Lebanon seem fairly propitious for such a tacit agreement. With a grave economic crisis and inflation of around 400 percent, Shimon Peres can and does inform his Likud colleagues that there is simply no money for more settlements on the West Bank. Both Likud and the country seem to accept that. This situation could lead to an abandonment—again a tacit one—of the attempt to make Judea and Samaria Jewish, and a return to the old Dayan policy of minimal interference with the Arab population. Such a policy shift could open the way to closer, if unavowed, cooperation between Israel and Jordan, with both parties encouraging the West Bank's residents to put up with their anomalous but not necessarily intolerable status as Jordanian subjects in civil matters living in a territory under Israel's military control. And—despite the verbal deference accorded by Hussein and the West Bank mayors to the PLO—deep down Israel, the West Bank population, and Jordan share an interest in continuing to prohibit the fedayeen from implanting

themselves in the West Bank. (The effort to implant them after 1967 did not receive the general support of the West Bank population, or of Jordan.)

Arrangements of this type seem about the best available, within the bounds of realistic assessment. But all such arrangements would remain precarious and vulnerable. That is obvious in the case of the tacit understandings: the actual (and improvable) one with Jordan, and the possible one with Syria. But even the formal peace treaty between Israel and Egypt could be denounced—in the event of, for example, a seizure of power in Cairo by a group of extreme nationalist or Moslem fundamentalist officers. In that case Israel would have surrendered territory, in Sinai, without securing lasting peace.



FOR ORDINARY ISRAELIS, the siege remains a fact of daily life. On March 21, 1985, in Jerusalem, I watched a group of schoolchildren coming down the steps of Yemin Moshe Street to take a look at one of Jerusalem's jollier landmarks, the Montefiore Windmill. Just behind the children were two men in civilian clothes carrying submachine

guns. Since Israeli schools and children have become targets of fedayeen attack, Israeli parents have begun, as a matter of routine, taking turns at maintaining guard over the schools and the children.

Outsiders often refer to Israel's "siege mentality." The phrase is quite accurate except when it is used to imply that the siege exists in the mind alone. The siege is a reality now in the Middle East, as it was in the past in Europe. The fusion of the two sieges into one—a fusion that was at the core of Menachem Begin's vision of the world—is indeed a historically formed phenomenon of the mind. But it is so powerful and so haunting a phenomenon of the mind that it is now also a large part of the political reality of the Middle East.

It has become commonplace to call Israel a militaristic state, a new Prussia or a new Sparta. But Israel is not at all like that. Spartan and Prussian militarism, and others—Napoleon's, for example—were based on a sustained willingness to accept high casualties. Israel's policies are shaped, to an extent unparalleled in the history of any other major military power, by a desire to avoid loss of life among its soldiers. Anyone who has been in Israel during a period of war culminating in victory—as I was, in June of 1982—knows that there is at such times nothing remotely resembling a "Mafeking" spirit, only a universal apprehension and sorrow about Israeli casualties.

It is the very intensity of this concern about the need to save Jewish lives, a concern that has the Holocaust at the back of it, that produces the pattern of military behavior so shocking to outside observers. Israel refuses to accept a conflict of attrition—"one for one"—which it must inevitably lose, because of its inferiority in numbers. Israel has therefore consistently applied the doctrine of "asymmetrical response"—hitting back with far greater force at the quarter from which it was attacked.

Israel withdrew from most of Lebanon last spring because of the unacceptably high casualties—more than 650 Israelis had been killed since June of 1982—that remaining in Lebanon involved. And when Shiite militia inflicted further casualties on the retreating Israeli forces, those forces hit back with their accustomed increment of violence. It was the level of Israeli casualties that determined both the retreat and the reprisals.

For some outside observers, the reprisals tended to obscure the fact of the retreat and the mood that dictated that retreat. That mood, in my belief, remains the one described by Eric Silver in the immediate aftermath of Begin's retirement:

The Israel Menachem Begin created in his own image was more narrowly Jewish, more aggressive and more isolated. Social and religious tensions were closer to the surface. But as the Kahan Commission demonstrated, government was still accountable to the people, democracy and the rule of law were alive and kicking. The press was not silenced by appeals to patriotism. In the autumn of 1983, the disengagement from the problems of Lebanon showed Israelis soberly aware of their limitations as well as their strengths. That was not the legacy the sixth Prime Minister had meant to leave his people, but it was one worth cherishing.

Shimon Peres's style as prime minister reflects that mood. He seems today modest and judicious, and free—as is Shamir—from the contagious and intoxicating shrillness of Begin. The Government of National Unity has done a little better than most people thought it might, and Peres's own stature has risen accordingly. There are chances of greater accommodations and relaxing of tensions. But neither the Government of National Unity nor any probable successor is likely to be able to lift the siege altogether.

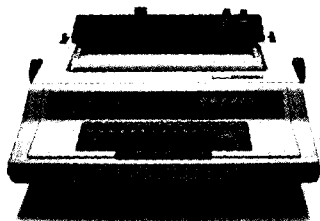
Israel is obliged, by the very nature of its predicament, to remain forever on its guard and to be the ultimate judge of its own security. And those who condemn Israel should reflect that its predicament is not the creation of Israelis only but is also the creation of all the rest of us: those who attacked and destroyed the Jews in Europe, and those in Europe and America who just quietly closed our doors.

Against that background Western statesmen might have the grace to be more sparing in their admonitions ad-

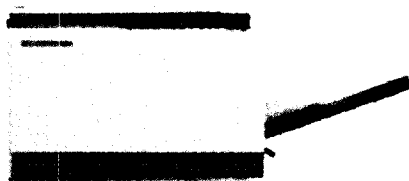
dressed to Israel, keeping in mind that many of the peoples those statesmen represent did much, over many years, and in many ways, to impress upon Jews the necessity of creating the Jewish state.

THE PALESTINIAN ARABS HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO SAY that they are the indirect and innocent victims of what happened to the Jews in Europe. They are. They are also the victims of the vanity and fantasies of their own leaders; victims also of the Machiavellian Arab rulers—who use them as stalking-horses in the pursuit of their own ends—and of illusions promoted by the hollow and far-from-disinterested sympathy of European leaders. The best hope of the West Bank residents is in ceasing to rely on Palestinian émigrés or professions of sympathy whose cruel unreliability has been demonstrated on countless occasions. They have to face Israel, on their own, with nothing serious going for them except their lifeline to Jordan. Their best hope for the future lies not in the illusory and ever-receding perspective of "territory for peace" but in the strengthening of the "adversarial partnership" or tacit condominium between Israel and Jordan. In practice West Bank residents have shown a willingness to support that condominium, over the years, to the extent that it was available. Events in Lebanon from 1982 to 1985 have surely been of a nature to suggest to West Bank residents that the people who are most clamorous about the absolute need to secure "full Palestinian rights" are no friends of the Palestinians'. It was not only Christian Arabs, allied with Israel, who massacred Palestinian Arabs, at Sabra and Shatila (in 1982); it was also Moslem Arabs, allied with Syria, who carried out such massacres (in 1985). There was a world outcry about the first massacres; remarkably little was heard about the second. But Palestinians were equally victims in both cases.

Israeli leaders, as Eric Silver suggests, have been at least to some extent sobered and chastened by some of the results for Israel of Sharon's hubris over Lebanon. It may be that a similar process is going on among Palestinian leaders, where it matters most: on the West Bank itself. If so, the illusory and highly publicized pursuit of "territory for peace" is likely to be paralleled by quieter talks about how to make the sharing of the territory somewhat less uncomfortable and less dangerous for Israelis and Palestinians alike—as well as for the Jordanians. If so—and on the other *relatively* optimistic hypotheses discussed above—we will witness a considerable abatement of the siege of Israel as the century draws to a close. But the possible abatement depends on Arab recognition of superior Israeli military strength and adjustment to that fact, which is not likely to be accepted as a permanent fact. And so "abatement" implies suspension, not necessarily an approaching termination. What is not in sight is an end to the siege. □



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A Short Story



WHAT FEELS LIKE THE WORLD

BY RICHARD BAUSCH

VERY EARLY IN THE MORNING, TOO EARLY, HE HEARS her trying to jump rope out on the sidewalk below his bedroom window. He wakes to the sound of her shoes on the concrete, her breathless counting as she jumps—never more than three times in succession—and fails again to find the right rhythm, the proper spring in her legs to achieve the thing, to be a girl jumping rope. He gets up and moves to the window and, parting the curtain only slightly, peers out at her. For some reason he feels he must be stealthy, must not let her see him gazing at her from this window. He thinks about the heartless way children tease the imperfect among them, and then he closes the curtain.

She is his only granddaughter, the unfortunate inheritor of his big-boned genes, his tendency toward bulk, and she is on a self-induced program of exercise and dieting, to lose weight. This is in preparation for the last meeting of the PTA, during which children from the fifth and sixth grades will put on a gymnastics demonstration. There will be a vaulting horse and a mini-trampoline, and everyone is to participate. She wants to be able to do at least as well as the other children in her class, and so she has been trying exercises to improve her coordination and lose the weight that keeps her rooted to the ground. For the past two weeks she has been eating only one meal a day, usually lunch, since that's the meal she eats at school, and swallowing cans of juice at other mealtimes. He's afraid of anorexia but trusts her calm determination to get ready for the event. There seems no desperation, none of the classic symptoms of the disease. Indeed, this project she has set for herself seems quite sane: to lose ten pounds, and to be able to get over the vaulting horse—in fact, she hopes that she will be able to do a handstand on it and, curling her head and shoulders, flip over to stand upright on the other side. This, she has told him, is the outside hope. And in two weeks of very grown-up discipline and single-minded effort, that hope has mostly disappeared; she is still the only child in the fifth grade who has not even been able to propel herself over the horse, and this is the day of the event. She will have one last chance to practice at school today, and so she is up this early, out on the lawn, straining, pushing herself.

He dresses quickly and heads downstairs. The ritual in the mornings is simplified by the fact that neither of them is eating breakfast. He makes orange juice, puts vitamins on a saucer for them both. When he glances out the living-

room window, he sees that she is now doing somersaults in the dewy grass. She does three of them while he watches, and he is not stealthy this time but stands in the window with what he hopes is an approving, unworried look on his face. After each somersault she pulls her sweat shirt down, takes a deep breath, and begins again, the arms coming down slowly, the head ducking slowly under: it is as if she falls on her back, sits up, and then stands up. Her cheeks are ruddy with effort. The moistness of the grass is on the sweat suit, and in the ends of her hair. It will rain this morning—there's thunder beyond the trees at the end of the street. He taps on the window, gestures, smiling, for her to come in. She waves at him, indicates that she wants him to watch her, so he watches her. He applauds when she's finished—three hard, slow tumbles. She claps her hands together as if to remove dust from them and comes trotting to the door. As she moves by him, he tells her she's asking for a bad cold, letting herself get wet so early in the morning. It's his place to nag. Her glance at him acknowledges this.

"I can't get the rest of me to follow my head," she says about the somersaults.

They go into the kitchen, and she sits down, pops a vitamin into her mouth, and takes a swallow of the orange juice. "I guess I'm not going to make it over that vaulting horse after all," she says suddenly.

"Sure you will."

"I don't care." She seems to pout. This is the first sign of true discouragement she's shown.

He's been waiting for it. "Brenda—honey, sometimes people aren't good at these things. I mean, I was never any good at it."

"I bet you were," she says. "I bet you're just saying that to make me feel better."

"No," he says, "really."

He's been keeping to the diet with her, though there have been times during the day when he has cheated. He no longer has a job, and the days are long: he's hungry all the time. He pretends to her that he's still going on to work in the mornings after he walks her to school, because he wants to keep her sense of the daily balance of things, of a predictable and orderly routine, intact. He believes this is the best way to deal with grief—simply to go on with things, to keep them as much as possible as they have always been. Being out of work doesn't worry him, really: he has enough money in savings to last a while. At sixty-one,



he's almost eligible for Social Security, and he gets monthly checks from the girl's father, who lives with another woman and other children, in Oregon. The father has been very good about keeping up with the payments, though he never visits or calls. Probably he thinks the money buys him the privilege of remaining aloof, now that Brenda's mother is gone. Brenda's mother used to say he was the type of man who learned early that there was nothing of substance anywhere in his soul, and spent the rest of his life trying to hide this fact from himself. No one was more upright, she would say, no one more honorable, and God help you if you ever had to live with him. Brenda's father was the subject of bitter sarcasm and scorn, and yet,

perhaps not so surprisingly, Brenda's mother would call him in those months just after the divorce, when Brenda was still only a toddler, and she would try to get the baby to say things to him over the phone; she would sit there with Brenda on her lap and cry after she had hung up.

"I had a doughnut yesterday at school," Brenda says now.

"That's lunch. You're supposed to eat lunch."

"I had spaghetti, too. And three pieces of garlic bread. And pie. And a big salad."

"What's one doughnut."

"Well, and I didn't eat anything the rest of the day."

"I know," her grandfather says. "See?"

They sit quiet for a little while. Sometimes they're shy with each other—more so lately. They're used to the absence of her mother by now—it's been more than a year—but they still find themselves missing a beat now and then, like a heart with a valve almost closed. She swallows the last of her juice and then gets up and moves to the living room, to stand gazing out at the yard. Big drops have begun to fall. It's a storm, with rising wind and, now, very loud thunder. Lightning branches across the sky, and the trees in the yard disappear in sheets of rain. He has come to her side, and he pretends an interest in the details of the weather, remarking on the heaviness of the rain, the strength of the wind. "Some storm," he says finally. "I'm glad we're not out in it." He wishes he could tell what she's thinking, where the pain is; he wishes he could be certain of the harmlessness of his every word. "Honey," he ventures, "we could play hooky today. If you want to."

"Don't you think I can do it?" she says.

"I know you can."

She stares at him a moment and then looks away, out at the storm.

"It's terrible out there, isn't it?" he says. "Look at that lightning."

"You don't think I can do it," she says.

"No, I know you can. Really."

"Well, I probably can't."

"Even if you can't. Lots of people—lots of people never do anything like that."

"I'm the only one who can't that I know."

"Well, there's lots of people. The whole thing is silly, Brenda. A year from now it won't mean anything at all—you'll see."

She says nothing.

"Is there some pressure at school to do it?"

"No." She answers simply, looking directly at him.

"You're sure."

She's sure. And of course, he realizes, there *is* pressure: there's the pressure of being one among other children, and being the only one among them who can't do a thing.

"Honey," he says lamely, "it's not that important."

When she looks at him this time, he sees something scarily unchildlike in her expression, some perplexity that she seems to pull down into herself. "It is too important," she says.

HE DRIVES HER TO SCHOOL. THE RAIN IS STILL BEING blown along the street and above the low roofs of the houses. By the time they arrive, no more than five minutes from the house, it has begun to let up.

"If it's completely stopped after school," she says, "can we walk home?"

"Of course," he says. "Why wouldn't we?"

She gives him a quick wet kiss on the cheek. "Bye, Pops."

He knows she doesn't like it when he waits for her to get inside, and still he hesitates. There's always the apprehen-

sion that he'll turn away or drive off just as she thinks of something she needs from him, or that she'll turn to wave and he won't see her. So he sits here with the car engine idling, and she walks quickly up the sidewalk and into the building. In the few seconds before the door swings shut, she turns and gives him a wave, and he waves back. The door is closed now. Slowly he lets the car glide forward, still watching the door. Then he's down the driveway, and he heads back to the house.

IT'S HARD TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO WITH HIS TIME. Mostly he stays in the house, watches television, reads the newspapers. There are household tasks, but he can't do anything she might notice, since he's supposed to be at work during these hours. Sometimes, just to please himself, he drives over to the bank and visits with his old co-workers, though there doesn't seem to be much to talk about anymore and he senses that he makes them all uneasy. Today he lies down on the sofa in the living room and rests a while. At the windows the sun begins to show, and he thinks of driving into town, perhaps stopping somewhere to eat a light breakfast. He accuses himself with the thought and then gets up and turns the television on. There isn't anything of interest to watch, but he watches anyway. The sun is bright now out on the lawn, and the wind is the same, gusting now and again and shaking the window frames. On the television he sees feasts of incredible sumptuousness, almost nauseating in the impossible brightness and succulence of the food: advertisements from cheese companies, dairy associations, the makers of cookies and pizza, the sellers of seafood and steaks. He's angry with himself for wanting to cheat on the diet. He thinks of Brenda at school, thinks of crowds of children, and it comes to him more painfully than ever that he can't protect her. Not any more than he could ever protect her mother.

He goes outside and walks up the drying sidewalk to the end of the block. The sun has already dried most of the morning's rain, and the wind is warm. In the sky are great stormy Matterhorns of cumulus and wide patches of the deepest blue. It's a beautiful day, and he decides to walk over to the school. Nothing in him voices this decision: he simply begins to walk. He knows without having to think about it that he can't allow her to see him, yet he feels compelled to take the risk that she might; he feels a helpless wish to watch over her, and, beyond this, he entertains the vague notion that by seeing her in her world he might be better able to be what she needs in his.

So he walks the four blocks to the school and stands just beyond the playground, in a group of shading maples that whisper and sigh in the wind. The playground is empty. A bell rings somewhere in the building, but no one comes out. It's not even eleven o'clock in the morning. He's too late for morning recess and too early for the afternoon one. He feels as though she watches him make his way back down the street.

HIS NEIGHBOR, MRS. EBERHARD, COMES OVER FOR lunch. It's a thing they planned, and he's forgotten about it. She knocks on the door, and when he opens it she smiles and says, "I knew you'd forget." She's on a diet too, and is carrying what they'll eat: two apples, some celery and carrots. It's all in a clear plastic bag, and she holds it toward him in the palms of her hands as though it were piping hot from an oven. Jane Eberhard is relatively new in the neighborhood. When Brenda's mother died, Jane offered to cook meals and regulate things, and for a while she was like another member of the family. She's moved into their lives now, and sometimes they all forget the circumstances under which the friendship began. She's a solid, large-hipped woman of fifty-two, with bright young green eyes and a wide, expressive mouth. The thing she's good at is sympathy; there's something oddly unspecific about it, as if it's a beam she simply radiates.

"You look so worried," she says now. "I think you should be proud of her."

They're sitting in the living room, with the plastic bag on the coffee table before them. She's eating a stick of celery.

"I've never seen a child that age put such demands on herself," she says.

"I don't know what it's going to do to her if she doesn't make it over the damn thing," he says.

"It'll disappoint her. But she'll get over it."

"I don't guess you can make it tonight."

"Can't," she says. "Really. I promised my mother I'd take her to the ocean this weekend."

"I walked over to the school a little while ago."

"Are you sure you're not putting more into this than she is?"

"She was up before dawn this morning, Jane. Didn't you see her?"

Mrs. Eberhard nods. "I saw her."

"Well?" he says.

She pats his wrist. "I'm sure it won't matter a month from now."

"No," he says, "that's not true. I mean, I wish I could believe you. But I've never seen a kid work so hard."

"Maybe she'll make it."

"Yes," he says. "Maybe."

Mrs. Eberhard sits considering for a moment, tapping the stick of celery against her lower lip. "You think it's tied to the accident in some way, don't you?"

"I don't know," he says, standing, moving across the room. "I can't get through somehow. It's been all this time and I still don't know. She keeps it all to herself—all of it. All I can do is try to be there when she wants me to be there. I don't know—I don't even know what to say to her."

"You're doing all you can do, then."

"Her mother and I . . ." he begins. "She—we never got along that well."

"You can't worry about that now."

Mrs. Eberhard's advice is always the kind of practical good advice that's impossible to follow.

He comes back to the sofa and tries to eat one of the apples, but his appetite is gone. This seems ironic to him. "I'm not hungry now," he says.

"Sometimes worry is the best thing for a diet."

"I've always worried. It never did me any good, but I worried."

"I'll tell you," Mrs. Eberhard says. "It's a terrific misfortune to have to be raised by a human being."

He doesn't feel like listening to this sort of thing, so he asks her about her husband, who is with the government in some capacity that requires him to be both secretive and mobile. He's always off to one country or another, and this week he's in India. It's strange to think of someone traveling as much as he does without getting hurt or killed. Mrs. Eberhard says that she's so used to his being gone all the time that next year, when he retires, it will take a while to get used to having him underfoot. In fact, he's not a very likable man; there's something murky and unpleasant about him. The one time Mrs. Eberhard brought him to visit, he sat in the living room and seemed to regard everyone with detached curiosity, as if they were all specimens on a dish under a lens. When he spoke, his voice was cultivated and quiet, full of self-satisfaction and haughtiness. They had been speaking in low tones about how Jane Eberhard had moved in to take over after the accident, and Mrs. Eberhard's husband cleared his throat, held his fist gingerly to his mouth, pursed his lips, and began a soft-spoken, lecture-like monologue about his belief that there's no such thing as an accident. His considered opinion was that there are subconscious explanations for everything. Apparently, he thought he was entertaining everyone. He sat with one leg crossed over the other and held forth in his calm, magisterial voice, explaining how everything can be reduced to a matter of conscious or subconscious will. Finally, his wife asked him to let it alone, please, drop the subject.

"For example," he went on, "there are many collisions on the highway in which no one appears to have applied brakes before impact, as if something in the victims had decided on death. And of course there are the well-known cases of people stopped on railroad tracks, with plenty of time to get off, who simply do not move. Perhaps it isn't being frozen by the perception of one's fate but a matter of decision-making, of will. The victim decides on his fate."

"I think we've had enough now," Jane Eberhard said.

The inappropriateness of what he had said seemed to dawn on him then. He shifted in his seat and grew very quiet, and when the evening was over he took Brenda's grandfather by the elbow and apologized. But even in the apology there seemed to be a species of condescension, as if he were really only sorry for the harsh truth of what he had wrongly deemed it necessary to say. When they were gone, Brenda said, "I don't like that man."

"Is it because of what he said about accidents?" her grandfather asked.

She shook her head. "I just don't like him."

"It's not true, what he said, honey. An accident is an accident."

She said, "I know." But she would not return his gaze.

"Your mother wasn't very happy here, but she didn't want to leave us. Not even—you know, without . . . without knowing it or anything."

"He wears perfume," she said, still not looking at him.

"It's cologne. Yes, he does—too much of it."

"It smells," she said.

IN THE AFTERNOON HE WALKS OVER TO THE SCHOOL. The sidewalks are crowded with children, and they all seem to recognize him. They carry their books and papers and their hair is windblown and they run and wrestle with each other in the yards. The sun's high and very hot,

TAKING PLEASURE

"Love? Nothing simpler," murmured the goddess —
and all my carefully husbanded breath
escaped me. Oh you may well imagine
the way things went, sprawling among cushions,
dozing away a dozen afternoons
thirsty for more kisses, a sweet lout
hitting the lottery on his first try,
scrawling the one poem that will make his name.

Each soul locks up its half-forgotten story
telling for instance how we worked our way
through twiggy thickets past crags of appetite
toward the one clearing where somebody will listen.

Which of us knows how you may "change your life,"
rip off the gloves of labor and breathe easy?
No way. With miles to run to get to the finish,
no one can balance accounts. The flower bed's
unweeded, nothing in flower, either about-
to-bloom or just-gone-past-its-best. The dream
we thirst for is the thought of a green shade
where somebody else has finished up the chores
and the result is *us*:
a catch in the breath, the ripple of desire,
a mother's murmur to her favorite child.

After the faltering of ordinary daylight
the rainbow casts its colors, no one asking.

—Peter Davison

and most of the clouds have broken apart and scattered. There's still a fairly steady wind, but it's gentler now, and there's no coolness in it.

Brenda is standing at the first crossing street down the hill from the school; she's surrounded by other children yet seems separate from them somehow. She sees him and smiles. He waits on his side of the intersection for her to cross, and when she reaches him he's careful not to show any obvious affection, knowing it embarrasses her.

"How was your day?" he begins.

"Mr. Clayton tried to get me to quit today."

He waits.

"I didn't get over," she says. "I didn't even get close."

"What did Mr. Clayton say?"

"Oh—you know. That it's not important. That kind of stuff."

"Well," he says gently, "is it so important?"

"I don't know." She kicks at something in the grass along the edge of the sidewalk—a piece of a pencil someone else has discarded. She bends, picks it up, examines it, and then drops it. They walk on. She's concentrating on the sidewalk before them, and they walk almost in step.

"I'm sure I never could do a thing like that when I was in school," he says.

"Did they have that when you were in school?"

He smiles. "It was hard getting everything into the caves. But sure, we had that sort of thing. We were an advanced tribe. We had fire, too."

"Okay," she says. "Okay."

"Actually, with me, it was pull-ups. We all had to do pull-ups. And I just couldn't do them. I don't think I ever accomplished a single one in my life."

"I can't do pull-ups," she says.

"They're hard to do."

"Everybody in the fifth and sixth grades can get over the vaulting horse," she says.

HOW MUCH SHE REMINDS HIM OF HER MOTHER: there's a certain mobility in her face, a certain willingness to assert herself in the smallest gesture of the eyes and mouth. She has her mother's green eyes, and now he tells her this. He's decided to try this. He's standing, quite shy, in her doorway, feeling like an intruder. She's sitting on the floor, one leg outstretched, the other bent at the knee. She tries to touch her forehead to the knee of the outstretched leg, straining, and he looks away.

"You know?" he says. "They're just the same color—just that shade of green."

"What was my grandmother like?" she asks, still straining.

"She was a lot like your mother."

"I'm never going to get married."

"Of course you will. Well, I mean—if you want to, you will."

"How come you didn't ever get married again?"

"Oh," he says, "I had a daughter to raise, you know."

She changes position, tries to touch her forehead to the other knee.

"I'll tell you, that mother of yours was enough to keep me busy. I mean, I called her double trouble, you know, because I always said she was double the trouble a son would have been. That was a regular joke between us."

"Am I double trouble?"

"No," he says, smiling at her.

"Is that really why you didn't get married again?"

"Well, no one would have me, either."

"Mom said you liked it."

"Liked what?"

"Being a widow."

"Yes, well," he says.

"Did you?"

"All these questions," he says.

"Do you think about Grandmom a lot?"

"Yes," he says. "That's—you know, we remember our loved ones."

She stands and tries to touch her toes without bending her legs. "Sometimes I dream that Mom's yelling at me."

"Oh, well," he says, hearing himself say it, feeling himself back down from something. "That's—that's just a dream. You know, it's nothing to think about at all. And I'll bet these exercises are going to do the trick."

"I'm very smart, aren't I?"

He feels sick, very deep down. "You're the smartest little girl I ever saw."

"You don't have to come tonight if you don't want to," she says. "You can drop me off if you want, and come get me when it's over."

"Why would I do that?"

She mutters, "I would."

"Then why don't we skip it?"

"Lot of good *that* would do," she says.

FOR DINNER THEY DRINK APPLE JUICE, AND HE GETS her to eat two slices of dry toast. The apple juice is for energy. She drinks it slowly and then goes into her room to lie down, to conserve her strength. She uses the word *conserve*, and he tells her he's so proud of her vocabulary. She thanks him. While she rests, he does a few household chores, trying really just to keep busy. The week's newspapers have been piling up on the coffee table in the living room, the carpets need to be vacuumed, and the whole house needs dusting. None of it takes long enough; none of it quite distracts him. For a while he sits in the living room with a newspaper in his lap and pretends to be reading it. She's restless too. She comes back through to the kitchen, drinks another glass of apple juice, and then joins him in the living room, turns the television on. The news is full of traffic deaths, and she turns to one of the local stations that shows reruns of old situation comedies. They both watch *M*A*S*H* without really taking it in. She bites the cuticles of her nails, and her eyes wander around the room. He knows he could speak to her now,

could make his way through to her grief—and he knows, too, that he will do no such thing; he can't even bring himself to speak at all. There are regions of his own sorrow that he simply lacks the strength to explore. And so he sits there watching her restlessness, and at last it's time to go over to the school. Jane Eberhard makes a surprise visit, bearing a handsome good-luck card she's fashioned herself. She kisses Brenda, behaves exactly as if Brenda is going off to some dangerous, faraway place. She stands in the street and waves at them as they pull away, and Brenda leans out the window to shout good-bye. A moment later, sitting back and staring out at the dusky light, she says she feels a surge of energy, and he tells her she's way ahead of all the others in her class, knowing words like *conserve* and *surge*.

"I've always known them," she says.

It's beginning to rain again. Clouds have been rolling in from the east, and the wind shakes the trees. Lightning flickers on the other side of the clouds. Everything seems threatening, relentless. He slows down. There are many cars parked along both sides of the street. "Quite a turnout," he manages.

"Don't worry," she tells him brightly. "I still feel my surge of energy."

It begins to rain as they get out of the car, and he holds his sport coat like a cape to shield her from it. By the time they get to the open front doors, it's raining very hard. People are crowding into the cafeteria, which has been transformed into an arena for the event—chairs set up on four sides of the room as though for a wrestling match. In the center, at the end of the long, bright-red mat, are the vaulting horse and the mini-trampoline. The physical-education teacher, Mr. Clayton, stands at the entrance. He's tall, thin, scraggly looking, a boy really, no older than twenty-five.

"There's Mr. Clayton," Brenda says.

"I see him."

"Hello, Mr. Clayton."

Mr. Clayton is quite distracted, and he nods quickly, leans toward Brenda, and points to a doorway across the hall. "Go on ahead," he says. Then he nods at her grandfather.

"This is it," Brenda says.

Her grandfather squeezes her shoulder, means to find the best thing to tell her, but in the next confusing minute he's lost her; she's gone among the others and he's being swept along with the crowd entering the cafeteria. He makes his way along the walls behind the chairs, where a few other people have already gathered and are standing. At the other end of the room a man is speaking from a lectern about old business, new officers for the fall. Brenda's grandfather recognizes some of the people in the crowd. A woman looks at him and nods, a familiar face he can't quite place. She is holding a baby; the baby is staring at him over her small shoulder. She turns to him now and steps back a little to stand next to him.

"What a crowd," she says.

He nods.

The baby protests, and he touches the miniature fingers of one hand.

"How is—Brenda?" she says.

"Oh," he says, "fine." And he remembers that she was Brenda's first-grade teacher. She's heavier than she was then, and her hair is darker. She has a baby now.

"I don't remember all my students," she says, shifting the baby to the other shoulder. "I've been home now for eighteen months, and I'll tell you, being at the PTA meeting makes me see how much I don't miss it."

He smiles at her and nods. He's beginning to feel awkward. The man is still speaking from the lectern, a meeting is going on, and this woman's voice is carrying beyond them, though she speaks out of the side of her mouth.

"I remember the way you used to walk Brenda to school every morning. Do you still walk her to school?"

"Yes."

"I always thought that was so nice to see." She turns and seems to watch the speaker for a moment, and then speaks to him again, this time in a near whisper. "I hope you won't take this the wrong way or anything, but I just wanted to say how sorry I was about your daughter. I saw it in the paper when Brenda's mother . . . You know. I just wanted to tell you how sorry. When I saw it in the paper, I thought of Brenda, and how you used to walk her to school. I lost my sister in an automobile accident. I know how you feel—it's a terrible thing to have happen. I mean it's much too sudden a thing. I'm afraid now every time I get into a car."

"You're very kind," he says.

"It seems so senseless," she murmurs. "There's something so senseless about it when it happens. My sister went through a stop sign. She just didn't see it, I guess. But it wasn't a busy road or anything. If she'd come along one second later or sooner nothing would've happened. So senseless. Two drivers coming along two roads on a sunny day and they come together like that. I mean—what're the chances, really?"

He says nothing.

"How's Brenda handling it?"

"She's strong," he says.

"I remember when she first came into my class. She told everyone in the first minute that she'd come from Oregon. That she was living with her grandfather, and her mother was divorced."

"She was a baby when the divorce—when she moved here from Oregon."

This seems to surprise the woman. "Really," she says, low. "I got the impression it was recent for her. I mean, you know, that she had just come from it all. It was all very vivid for her, I remember that."

"She was a baby," he says. It's almost as if he's insisting on it. He's heard this in his voice, and he wonders if she has too.

"Well," she says, "I always had a special place for Brenda. I always thought she was very special. A very special little girl."

The PTA meeting is over, and Mr. Clayton is now standing at the far door with the first of his charges. They're all lining up outside the door, and Mr. Clayton walks to the microphone to announce the program. The demonstration will commence with the mini-trampoline and the vaulting horse: a performance by the fifth and sixth graders. There will also be a break-dancing demonstration by the fourth-grade classes.

"Here we go," the woman says. "My nephew's afraid of the mini-tramp."

"They shouldn't make them do these things," Brenda's grandfather says, with a passion that surprises him. He draws in a breath. "It's too hard," he says, loudly. He can't believe himself. "They shouldn't have to go through a thing like this."

"I don't know," she says vaguely, turning from him a little. He has drawn attention to himself. Others in the crowd are regarding him now—one, a man with a scraggly beard and a V-necked shirt, looking at him with something he takes for agreement.

"It's too much," he says, still louder. "Too much to put on a child. There's just so much a child can take."

Someone asks gently for quiet.

The first child is running down the long mat to the mini-trampoline; it's a girl, and she times her jump perfectly, soars over the horse. One by one, other children follow. Mr. Clayton and another man stand on either side of the horse and help those who go over on their hands. Two or three go over without any assistance at all, with remarkable effortlessness and grace.

"Well," Brenda's first-grade teacher says, "there's my nephew."

The boy hits the mini-tramp and does a perfect forward flip in the air over the horse, landing upright and then rolling forward in a somersault.

"Yea, Jack," she cheers. "No sweat. Yea, Jackie boy."

The boy trots to the other end of the room and stands with the others; the crowd is applauding. The last of the sixth graders goes over the horse, and Mr. Clayton says into the microphone that the fifth graders are next. It's Brenda who's next. She stands in the doorway, her cheeks flushed, her legs looking too heavy in the tights. She's rocking back and forth on the balls of her feet, getting ready. It grows quiet. Her arms swing slightly, back and forth, and now, just for a moment, she is looking at the crowd, her face hiding whatever she's feeling. It's as if she's merely curious as to who is out there, but he knows she's looking for him, searching the crowd for her grandfather, who stands on his toes, unseen against the far wall, stands there thinking his heart might break, lifting his hand to wave. □

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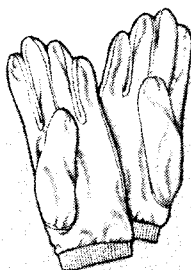
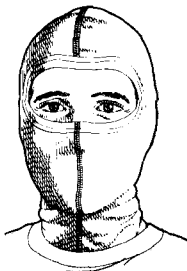


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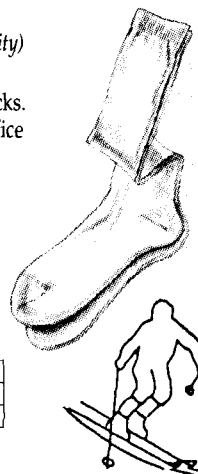
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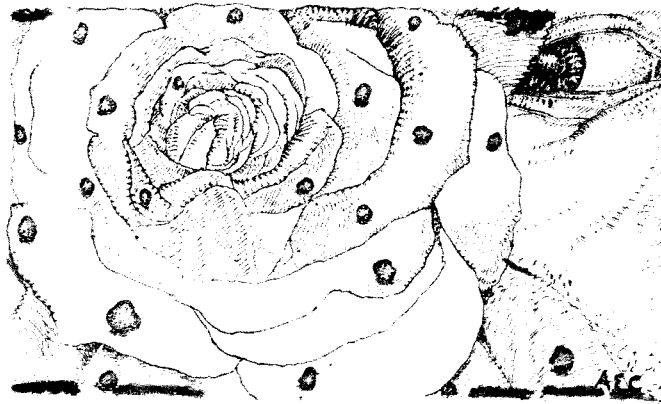
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*How a rush to scientific judgment on
yellow rain embarrassed both U.S. science and the U.S. government*

POLITICAL SCIENCE

BY PETER PRINGLE



A FAINT SHOWER SWEEPED ACROSS CHARLES DARWIN'S lush country garden, in the south of England, one summer morning in 1863, and when his wife brought him some white roses a few hours later, the indefatigable naturalist noted that the flowers were stained, tainted with yellow-tinged raindrops. Darwin put a drop of the "dirty water," as he called it, under his microscope, and there appeared numerous brown spherical bodies, each about one thousandth of an inch in diameter. He faithfully recorded his observation in a letter to the *Gardeners' Chronicle*, whose editors recalled that leaves found in a London garden had had similar yellow patches, containing grains of local fir pollen. The assumption was that pollen grains had been carried by the wind from nearby trees or plants and deposited on the raindrops. "It is quite astonishing," the *Chronicle* observed, "what a multitude of bodies are carried about by the wind in the form of dust."

Darwin's observation passed unnoticed into the archives of natural history until Ronald Reagan's first administration, when palynology, or the study of pollen, became the centerpiece of a search by the United States and its allies for a mysterious new Soviet chemical weapon.

In 1981 the United States accused the Soviet Union of violating international arms-control agreements by using a new chemical agent in Southeast Asia. According to reports from some of its victims, the agent could cause people to bleed to death internally, a symptom not associated with any known chemical weapon. Even more mysterious, samples of the agent, known as yellow rain, were found to consist largely of pollen grains.

In one of the strangest scientific quests in recent years,

some of the best of America's scientists joined scientists from Western allied countries in a two-year international investigation to try and find an explanation for the pollen's presence. Had the Soviets discovered a military use for the botanical male sex organ? Was pollen in fact an ingredient of the new weapon? Or had nature somehow added pollen to the agent residue—perhaps in the same way that it apparently had added pollen to the raindrops on Darwin's roses?

STORIES OF LETHAL CHEMICAL WEAPONS BEING USED by Communist forces in Laos and Kampuchea had come from refugees arriving in Thailand soon after American forces left Southeast Asia, in 1975. The reports sounded so wild, apparently exaggerated and sometimes spiced by superstitions, that no one took them very seriously. However, as the number of refugees increased—especially Hmong refugees from Laos to Thailand—so the number of reports of chemical warfare mounted. In 1979 the United States government decided to look more closely at the evidence. For the first time, American investigators collected leaves and bark dotted with yellow spots that, the refugees said, were samples of the chemical agent they called "yellow rain." Army chemists tested the spots—each one a few millimeters in diameter and weighing less than a postage stamp—for all known chemical agents, including riot-control gases and mustard and nerve gases, but found nothing. However, Army doctors who visited the refugee camps and listened patiently to the tales of illness and death said to be caused by the yellow rain be-

came convinced, on the basis of the stories alone, that the Communists were using some kind of illegal, lethal chemical-warfare agents—including an agent that caused internal bleeding and sometimes death.

Soon after President Reagan took office, the government, in what appeared to be a major scientific breakthrough, announced that it had solved the mystery. In September of 1981 Secretary of State Alexander Haig charged that Communist forces had been using mycotoxins, or fungal poisons, in Southeast Asia. If the charge was true, this was the first time such toxins had been used for mass killing, and it represented a new and menacing dimension to the threat of chemical warfare.

Haig's evidence was described as only a leaf and stem and was said to have been plucked from a bush in Kampuchea at the site of a recent battle between the Vietnamese and the Khmer Rouge forces. The leaf was reported to contain traces of the mycotoxins known as trichothecenes. Haig's staff speculated that the Soviets must have been involved, because the Vietnamese, who are military clients of Moscow, were not sophisticated enough to make such a weapon on their own. Later the United States would formally charge the Soviets with supplying the poisons to the Vietnamese and with violations of both the 1925 Geneva Protocol banning the use, though not the production and stockpiling, of chemical and biological weapons and the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, which prohibits even the manufacture and stockpiling of biological weapons.

In respect of these treaties Haig's charges were terribly grave. They came at a time when the world was about to witness a new outbreak of chemical-weapons use in the Persian Gulf war and when United States intelligence was secretly forecasting a rapid expansion in the number of countries possessing chemical weapons. Questions of Soviet compliance with past treaties and the ability of the United States to confirm that the Soviets are adhering to a treaty—the process known as “verification”—inevitably affect the attitudes of the Geneva arms-control negotiators and, later, of the senators voting on any new agreements. Whether or not the United States did catch the Soviets violating one of the oldest international arms-control treaties and whether or not the Soviets have been experimenting on a distant battlefield with a new class of chemical weapon deserve the most careful examination.

THE TERM YELLOW RAIN FIRST APPEARED IN THE American press on August 20, 1979. Writing for *The Washington Post* from Loei province, in northern Thailand, Stanley Karnow described how a young Hmong tribesman, Vang Dua Chang, had become a victim of chemical warfare in Laos. Vang had fought under General Vang Pao, the Hmong chief whose guerrilla army, funded and trained by the Central Intelligence Agency, had tried unsuccessfully to prevent a Lao-Vietnamese Communist victory. After the Americans left Southeast Asia,

most of Vang Pao's army fled, but several thousand of his guerrillas continued to fight in the remote highlands. Vang said that early in 1978 two jet aircraft had flown over his village at 1,000 feet, spraying a yellow rain. More than a hundred villagers fell sick, including himself. “I had a headache and my eyes swelled up, as if there were sand in them.” Twenty to thirty people in the village experienced sustained bouts of diarrhea and vomiting, he said, and a few days later they died.

Though convenient as a journalistic label, the term *yellow rain* concealed extraordinary confusion among the Hmong over exactly what kind of weapon was being used against them. Mostly, refugees reported—and the U.S. government accepted—that the agent left behind yellow spots or powders. But the refugees also offered a host of other descriptions of the “medicine from the sky.” It could be in the form of a gas, rain, or smoke. It could be in bombs, artillery shells, mines, hand grenades, or sacks that burst in midair. And it could be red, brown, green, blue, gray, black, or white, as well as yellow.

The range of colors was bewildering to government analysts at the U.S. Army's Chemical Research and Development Center, at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds, in Maryland, and at the nearby Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center, at Fort Detrick. Most known chemical agents are basically colorless when disseminated, and some analysts wondered whether the refugees could be confusing chemical weapons with the relatively innocuous colored-smoke bombs that are often used as target markers. Others wondered whether the Soviets could be using the remote battlefields in Southeast Asia to test a whole new arsenal of chemical agents.

Even more puzzling than the colors was the range of symptoms described by the victims. Many reported smelling something hot and peppery that produced a burning sensation in the eyes, nose, and throat, and they spoke of coughing, headaches, and vomiting—all symptoms of normally non-lethal riot-control gases commonly used by police forces. Such gases were used extensively by U.S. forces in Vietnam, and they are not considered by the United States to be subject to the restraints of the 1925 Geneva Protocol. But the refugees also reported more serious symptoms—the bloody diarrhea and vomiting of blood—that could result in death.

By the winter of 1979 the only persuasive evidence of chemical warfare was the sheer bulk of the refugee testimony, now totaling more than sixty reports. The first set of interviews was compiled by a State Department team. It relied largely on the part-time activities of two young foreign-service officers at the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, Ed McWilliams, who had served in Army intelligence in Vietnam, and Tim Carney, who had served in the embassy in Phnom Penh before 1975, plus a regular Army officer who had been in the Special Forces in Vietnam, Lieutenant Colonel Dennison Lane. None of these men had any special training in chemical warfare or medicine; as even they concede, their efforts at gathering evidence were amateur.

Funds allotted to the task were sparse, and McWilliams, who made trips from Bangkok to the refugee camps, could afford only the overnight bus to Chiang Khan, a northern Thai town from which he would hitch a ride into Ban Vinai camp. Ban Vinai became the prime source of stories about yellow rain, a fact that those skeptical of yellow rain say is important, because Ban Vinai had been established as a special camp for the remnants of Vang Pao's guerrilla army. Although McWilliams and Carney were diligent and dedicated officers, they had little guidance from Washington as to how the interviews should be conducted.

The Washington professionals, moreover, took little notice of their reports. Yellow rain was one of those ill-defined, seemingly goal-less foreign-policy sideshows with no career points attached. Also, some of the stories clearly were based on Hmong folklore. Refugees told other tales of a tree that during battles acted like a giant magnet and attracted anything metal, from rifles and hand grenades to exploding shells. Although the most common sample produced by the refugees was yellow spots on leaves, stones, or bark, they handed in all kinds of things, many of which had nothing whatever to do with chemical warfare. A tangled mass of purple cobwebs was offered by one zealous collector. Samples of yellow rain became a kind of refugee currency, to be offered to the camp authorities in the hope of a better life somewhere down the road.

As for the samples themselves, the U.S. investigators never knew their precise origins. Sometimes refugees fording the Mekong River, which runs along the northern border between Laos and Thailand, would bring samples; at other times an anonymous caller to the Bangkok embassy would say that a sample was available, and a member of the U.S. team would meet the source in a café and collect the sample, which was usually wrapped in plastic or even contained in a paper bag. Asked where the sample came from, the source would typically reply, "Oh, my friend in the resistance gave it to me." "Resistance" meant Vang Pao's army. Sometimes samples were obtained by bartering bottles of brandy at Thai police stations near the Laotian frontier. The yellow spots on leaves and bark were sent back to the Army's Aberdeen laboratories, but all tested negative for any known chemical agents.

At first none of the analysts at the State Department could find any patterns or clues in the refugees' stories to indicate what the Communist forces might be using. A CIA analyst said later, "We did not fundamentally believe the [refugee] reports. We thought that riot-control agents, possibly some tear gas and some incapacitants [non-lethal agents that put enemy troops out of action for a few hours without causing them any long-term harm], were being used." But as the number of reports grew, a curious complaint was discovered. The victims' skin itched and sometimes burst into white, fluid-filled welts; other times it turned black, even in areas protected by clothing. The skin disorders prompted the U.S. Army to send a five-man medical team to Thailand in the fall of 1979, with a dermatologist, Colonel Charles Lewis, in charge. The team

spent a week interviewing about forty Hmong refugees and found that more than half of their reports mentioned symptoms that could not be attributed to any known agent. On the basis of refugee interviews alone, Lewis estimated that between 700 and 1,000 people had died—the estimate would reach more than 7,000 as the inquiry continued. Lewis also concluded from the symptoms described by the refugees that three different agents had been used: a non-lethal riot-control gas, a lethal nerve gas that produced muscular convulsions, and a totally unknown agent that produced the internal bleeding. Now U.S. intelligence had a set of guidelines to help in its future inquiries, plus a special mission to find the mysterious agent.



THE MONITORING OF SOVIET CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL warfare activities was given a hefty boost after Ronald Reagan was elected in November of 1980. Officials in the new Administration sought information that could be used to show that the Soviets had cheated on past arms-control agreements, both nuclear and chemical, and the new director of the CIA, William Casey, upgraded the priority given to collecting information. In Bangkok, Ed McWilliams recalls, "increasing pressure came from Washington to identify the lethal gas."

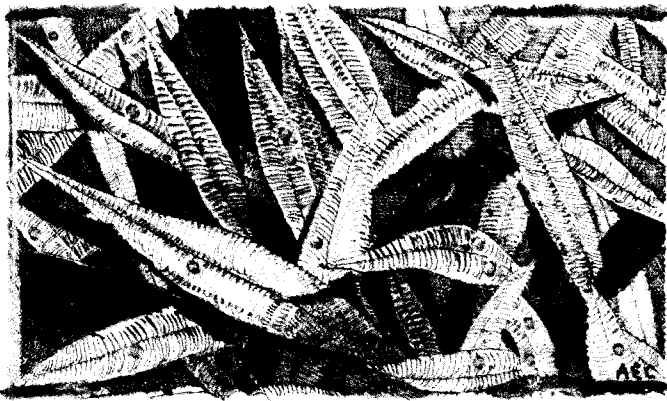
At home, intelligence analysts started to follow a new trail. A toxicologist named Sharon Watson, who had studied fungal toxins before joining the Army's medical-intelligence unit at Fort Detrick, is credited with being the first to match the mysterious hemorrhaging described by the refugees with a distinctive, though not exclusive, symptom of trichothecene poisoning in animals and human beings: weakening of the capillary walls of blood vessels, sometimes resulting in internal bleeding.

A search for outbreaks of human fungal poisoning—from mycotoxins found naturally in moldy grain—took analysts back more than a millennium. Epidemics of what are now believed to have been mycotoxin poisoning are recorded throughout history. One of the last serious outbreaks occurred during the closing years of the Second World War, when thousands of peasants in the Orenburg district of the Soviet Union died from eating moldy grain. Later the epidemic was attributed specifically to the ingestion of trichothecene toxins. Watson speculated that

the Soviets might have recognized the military potential of trichothecenes and turned them into a weapon—speculation that U.S. intelligence leaked to the media.

At the end of 1980 the CIA arranged for Sterling Seagrave, a peripatetic American journalist who was researching a book about chemical warfare, to meet Watson. In addition to the stories from Southeast Asia, Seagrave had heard reports of Soviet gas attacks against resistance fighters in Afghanistan and gruesome tales of lethal yellow and blue gases that made victims vomit blood and bleed from the eyes, nose, and ears. Seagrave's research in medical literature had suggested to him that some exotic marine toxins could cause similar symptoms, and he had approached the CIA with his theory. The CIA arranged for him to give a briefing to a group of yellow-rain investigators at the Defense Intelligence Agency. Watson was among them.

A few months later, on the condition that she not be identified as the source, Watson told Seagrave about her trichothecene theory. He was the first person outside the intelligence community to hear about it, and it became the focus of his book. "I've often pretended that I was the one to make the first [mycotoxin] connection, but that's only because I wasn't in a position to point the finger at Sharon," Seagrave now admits. "I was more than happy to take the credit."



AT FIRST WATSON'S SUPERIORS AT FORT DETRICK AND Aberdeen regarded her trichothecene theory as a little farfetched. They argued that the Soviets had much more effective agents already in their arsenal, so there was no reason for them to bother with trichothecenes—unless Southeast Asia battlegrounds were being used to test a new group of toxic weapons. Analysts at the CIA examined the files on Soviet toxin activity. Christopher (Kit) Green, a doctor working for the CIA who had been involved since 1976 in monitoring chemical-weapons use, "levied requirements," as the intelligence jargon goes. When analysts suspect something they cannot confirm and need classified information to pursue the suspicion, they ask government agencies monitoring the various intelligence-collection systems—satellite reconnaissance, intelligence from radio intercepts, and defector interrogations—for any relevant information. Green wanted to see

if the dates of attacks given by the refugees coincided with the dates provided by this other intelligence. His inquiries were secret, of course, as was the whole trichothecene mission, and to this day Green does not talk for the record about his work at the CIA. But in May, 1983, in a review of the government's inquiry, Green told relief workers at the Ban Vinai refugee camp that he had calculated early in 1981 that accidental correlations between the refugee stories and the intelligence information might be about 25 percent, and he had been astonished to find that the actual correlations were between 60 and 70 percent, a fact that added considerable credence to the refugees' testimony.

Still, scientific proof from sample evidence had not yet been found. In March of 1981 Thai military authorities delivered to the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok a sample of the alleged chemical agent made up of leaf and stem fragments. The fragments were said to have been taken from a battlefield in Kampuchea within twenty-four hours of a chemical attack. Watson was given the go-ahead to analyze the sample for trichothecenes. The Army laboratory was not equipped for such work—no one had ever considered trichothecenes a useful chemical-warfare agent—and a civilian analyst named Chester Mirocha, of the University of Minnesota, was employed as an outside consultant. During fifteen years of testing samples of corn for mycotoxins Mirocha had been doing analysis by a method known as gas chromatography-mass spectroscopy, or GC-MS. Today's GC-MS machines can cost in excess of quarter of a million dollars and can detect and identify the ingredients in a mixture down to billionths of a gram.

Mirocha's lab seemed like a good choice for an independent analysis—its distance from Washington helped establish a distance from government bias—but there was a problem in using Mirocha directly. He was theoretically prevented by university regulations from working on classified government projects, and the analysis of the yellow-rain sample was secret at that time. (The university's administrators later decided that Mirocha's work fell under the category of "outside services," and thus was not strictly university research, and the university regents commended Mirocha for his yellow-rain work.) Watson contacted her former associate Wallace Hayes, then a consultant pharmacologist with the U.S. chemical corporation Rohm and Haas. Hayes agreed to act as an intermediary between Watson and Mirocha so that Mirocha, for the time being, would not know that he was working for the government. Hayes took the Kampuchean sample to Mirocha's laboratory and asked him to analyze it for trichothecenes.

"I had no idea where the sample came from," Mirocha says, "and when Hayes said it was leaves, I asked him, Why leaves? Normally we analyze corn samples. He said he couldn't tell me. I thought he might have some new process for producing large quantities of trichothecenes and his company probably wanted to patent the process." Mirocha agreed to do the analysis. He says he didn't take it seriously until he started to find considerably larger amounts of trichothecenes than he would have expected in

an average agricultural sample. Unaware of the significance of his findings, Mirocha reported to Hayes that the sample contained an unusual combination of three different trichothecenes, called nivalenol, deoxynivalenol (DON), and T-2, in concentrations of 109 parts per million (ppm) nivalenol, 59 ppm DON, and 3.17 ppm T-2. A person weighing 110 pounds would have to eat at least a pound of such leaves before they could be considered lethal. In a subsequent sample of yellow powder Mirocha found a fourth trichothecene called diacetoxyscirpenol (DAS). Mirocha would say later that in fifteen years of diagnosing samples he had found T-2 only ten to fifteen times, and then in concentrations about a thousand times lower than that found on the Kampuchean leaves. Mirocha's results convinced him and, later, Secretary of State Haig that something unnatural had happened.

In August of 1981 Sterling Seagrave learned of Mirocha's results from a CIA contact. Seagrave told his contact that he had already written the mycotoxin theory into his book and asked what the government planned to do with its new analyses. According to Seagrave, his CIA contact replied that any reaction was up to the government's interagency yellow-rain monitoring group, which would have to decide whether to go public with the evidence immediately or wait for further tests to be done.

The interagency group included representatives from the State and Defense departments, the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), the Office of Management and Budget, and the White House National Security Council. The group's ranking political appointee was Richard Burt, then the head of the State Department's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, known as PM. Burt, a former journalist, had come to Haig's attention when Haig was the Allied Commander in Europe, through his aggressive reporting on national-security matters for *The New York Times*. Burt was also no newcomer to chemical warfare, having worked at the International Institute for Strategic Studies on NATO chemical-warfare options. Burt made no secret of the fact that his personal goal was to become assistant secretary of state for European affairs, and, in an Administration lacking foreign-policy expertise, he stood a good chance. But among the new Reagan hard-liners in the Administration and Congress, Burt—like Haig—was seen as a moderate, too pro-European and too soft on arms control. In presenting the government's yellow-rain case, however, this smart, ambitious man would demonstrate that both he and Haig could also be tough on the Soviets.

Some professionals were put off by Burt's brash style. They warned him against turning the yellow-rain issue into Cold War propaganda, fearing it could easily backfire. A thorough inquiry into the use of trichothecenes might be inconclusive; it might end with proof of nothing more than that the Soviet Union had been supplying riot gases to its Vietnamese clients. (The United States had itself used large quantities of riot gas in Vietnam.) Perhaps the government should wait for further scientific analyses before

making any announcement of the initial positive test.

Several forces worked to erode such institutional caution, however. Throughout the spring and summer of 1981 Jim Leach, a Republican congressman from Iowa, pestered and prodded the Administration to take more-direct action on yellow rain. As a foreign-service officer, Leach had spent two years on the U.S. delegation to the Geneva disarmament conference at which the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention had been drafted. He was thus somewhat more familiar with the highly technical and obscure world of chemical and biological weapons than his colleagues. He had been on a congressional visit to the refugee camps and had heard refugee testimony firsthand. His opinion was that lethal chemical weapons had been used, and he was conducting a personal crusade to publicize the issue. (Although most politicians in Congress would come to believe the government's charges, only a handful would actively take up the government's case, among them Republican Senator Larry Pressler and Democratic Congressman Stephen Solarz, now the chairman of the House Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs.) Leach, still fighting a lonely battle in 1981, would be very pleased with the outcome of the meeting of the interagency group which was called at the end of August to assess the implications of Mirocha's results.

RICHARD BURT WAS IN THE CHAIR. THE GROUP HAD swelled that day to almost fifty—double the usual number. Several major questions were discussed: Was there enough information on which to base charges of a breach of international law? Was the science airtight? Would it be better to wait for further analyses? What would the intelligence agencies be giving away if they revealed their so-far secret conclusions? What effect would an announcement have on future arms-control talks?

Sharon Watson, who had been elevated into this politically charged setting by her trichothecene theory, insisted that there was a perfect fit between the symptoms of trichothecene poisoning and the mysterious symptoms described by the refugees. The concentrations found by Mirocha were said to be far higher than those occurring normally in any natural environment, and the three trichothecenes that had been found together were a combination unknown in nature, according to the government scientists. Moreover, Watson asserted, the scientific literature revealed nothing about a natural occurrence of trichothecenes in Southeast Asia; they were unknown in that region. However, they did occur in temperate regions, especially the Soviet Union, and Soviet scientific literature contained many studies of trichothecenes based on outbreaks of disease contracted by eating moldy grain. If anyone knew how to make trichothecenes in the quantities and strengths needed for weapons, the Soviets did.

Kit Green told the group that he had just returned from a field trip to Thailand, where he had seen reports on autopsies performed on alleged yellow-rain victims by the

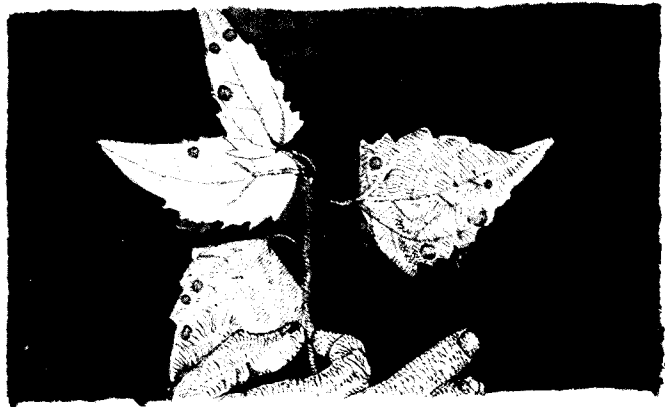
Thai military within twenty-four hours of an attack. Green would say later, "In one case bodies were examined, and crude field autopsies on approximately six or so soldiers were conducted, and the description was brought back of erosion in the stomach and the gastrointestinal tract, swelling of the spleen, that sort of thing." Green told the group that these symptoms were typical of the action of small-molecular-weight toxins, such as trichothecenes, and that the autopsies strongly suggested that toxins, possibly trichothecenes, had caused these deaths. Put together, the testimony of Watson and Green was "very persuasive," recalls one of the participants. "They never gave us any cause to have a reasonable doubt."

Despite Watson's confident assertions, Defense Department and intelligence officials remained undecided as to whether the government should make its findings public. Some feared that a public yellow-rain charge could rebound by arousing concern about a chemical-arms race and hindering the Reagan-backed proposals for a new generation of nerve-gas weapons. The intelligence agencies worried that they might disclose too much about their secret scientific detective work. The idea that the United States might have to reveal to the world how it had uncovered the Soviets' dirty work was "giving a lot of those guys out there [in the CIA] cardiac arrest," according to one member of the group. Both the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency urged delay.

The arms-control agency, ACDA, found itself in a special predicament. Under President Carter the United States had expressed concern about the refugee reports in private meetings with the Soviets and the Vietnamese; the Soviets had denied any wrongdoing, and bilateral talks on a new chemical-weapons treaty had continued until Reagan suspended them, in 1981. Some ACDA officials worried that the Soviets would be bound to react negatively to a public charge and thus delay meaningful negotiations toward a new chemical-weapons treaty. A second ACDA view countered that if there were grounds—any grounds—for supposing that the Soviets were indeed violating existing agreements, then the United States should say so. If that meant the end of arms-control talks, so be it. What was the point of negotiating treaties with people who didn't honor them? State Department professionals pushed for an announcement on humanitarian grounds, saying that it was the responsibility of the U.S. government to attempt to save lives by making public charges, even with slender evidence. Burt introduced the deciding factor. He said that the timing of an announcement had become crucial: publication of Sterling Seagrave's book containing the trichothecene theory and of a *Time* magazine story was imminent, and the State Department could not allow an outside source to be first with the news. Burt argued that if the government were scooped by the book and the magazine (which had been alerted to the test results by Seagrave), the State Department would look bad. "Burt seemed somewhat obsessed by being scooped," one participant later observed. "If he hadn't been a journalist before being

a politician, I doubt if he would have been so concerned about Seagrave and *Time*."

Burt advised the meeting that a good opportunity for announcing the results would be Haig's upcoming trip to Berlin. The charges would bolster the theme of Haig's speech, which was aimed at countering criticism of Western defense plans, especially the scheduled introduction of cruise and Pershing missiles into Europe. Burt just "railroaded it through," a participant recalled. "We were left with no doubt that Haig was going to do it."



AT FIRST HAIG'S YELLOW-RAIN SPEECH, GIVEN TO THE Berlin Press Association on September 13, seemed like a propaganda triumph. The next day the charges were widely reported and little questioned—at least in the American press. Some scientists criticized the paucity of the evidence, but the next month Mirocha reported finding trichothecenes in three more environmental samples. Burt quickly emerged as the Administration's chief yellow-rain spokesman, telling a congressional committee in November, "We now have that smoking gun." Using vivid descriptive prose better suited to his old newspaper columns than to Senate testimony, Burt described the "bright red blood" vomited by the yellow-rain victims and the sound of yellow-rain particles falling on rooftops. He reported that the collector of one water sample from Laos had accidentally spilled it on his person while bringing the sample through the jungles to Thailand. "As I understand it, he actually arrived in Thailand gravely ill . . . and contracted some of the symptoms that are connected with these mycotoxins," Burt said.

In the hearing room was Matthew Meselson, a veteran witness of congressional inquiries into chemical and biological warfare, who had also been invited to testify. Meselson is a Harvard biochemist whose laboratory is one of the nation's centers of research into molecular genetics and recombinant DNA. His early work on the double helix, colleagues say, could easily have brought him a Nobel Prize. Regarded as brilliant on both technical and theoretical questions, and as possessing inexhaustible patience, he was among the best and the brightest who flocked to Washington to work for the Kennedy Administration. He evaluated biological weapons at ACDA, was dismayed to find that

the United States was stockpiling such weapons, and began a long campaign to eliminate them from the arsenals.

Skeptical of Burt's testimony, Meselson made a quick calculation to see if the collector of the water sample could have become ill so quickly. Mirocha reported that the sample contained sixty-six parts per million of the trichothecene known as DON. Meselson estimated that if the trichothecenes were in solution, a person of average weight would need to swallow several quarts of the liquid for it to kill him. Later Mirocha revealed that he had analyzed not the solution itself but the thirty-three-milligram fragment of debris that remained after he'd evaporated the solution. The dried fragment had contained the DON, and the concentration of it in the solution as a whole was actually 0.22 ppm, not sixty-six. A person of average weight would have had to drink over 500 gallons of the solution at that concentration before he became "gravely ill."

That particular incident apart, the government's overall presentation of the case made Meselson suspicious. Although he agreed that the preliminary evidence could indicate that mycotoxins had been used on the battlefield, he was not satisfied with three of the government's points. First was the assertion that trichothecene mycotoxins, which are produced by fungi in the genus *Fusarium*, are common to cereal crops in cold climates but unknown in Southeast Asia. Meselson said that there simply was not enough known about trichothecenes to say that. Laboratory tests had shown that of the four trichothecenes reported by Mirocha, *Fusarium* produces all but T-2 in substantial concentrations even under very warm conditions.

Second, Meselson doubted that trichothecenes disseminated in particles or droplets, as described by Burt, would cause rapid hemorrhaging and death. In his own literature search Meselson had found studies suggesting that doses of T-2 taken orally by animals had no such effect. He noted that a recent paper co-authored by Mirocha and titled "The Failure of Purified T-2 Mycotoxin to Produce Hemorrhaging in Dairy Cattle" supported this suggestion, as did a British report that found similar negative results in calves and pigs. "This is not to say that under some as yet undemonstrated conditions some of the reported trichothecenes, singly or in combination, cannot cause the reported symptoms," Meselson said in his testimony at the hearing. "The point is . . . that at this time it would not be correct to say, regarding the demonstrated symptoms of the four trichothecenes and the reported symptoms, that the fit was perfect."

Third, Meselson introduced a new area of doubt concerning the type of chemical agent that might have been used. He showed that the symptoms reported by the refugees from Laos and Kampuchea were similar to those reported by Vietnamese highland villagers who had been close to areas sprayed with herbicides by the U.S. Air Force. "Now, we believe that the herbicides used should not have had these effects unless the villagers had some unusual and quite unexpected sensitivity," Meselson said. "However, this experience [in Vietnam] tells us that be-

tween the reported perceptions of the interviewed villagers who were exposed to herbicide spraying and the perceptions of the officials in Washington who authorized the herbicide program there was an extraordinary discrepancy. In sifting the various possible explanations of what occurred in Laos and Kampuchea, it may be important to keep this experience in mind. In summary, I would agree that our main interest is to stop what appears to be a serious use of toxic chemicals, [but] a convincing case has yet to be made to the scientific community that trichothecenes are in use. The question of their natural occurrence, I would say, is still at issue, and questions regarding the match of symptoms are also unresolved. And although problems of confidentiality may arise here, we need full and reliable assurance of the authenticity of the samples. While we keep studying and accumulating more data and . . . while we put the detailed findings before the scientific community, as has not yet been done, we should not hinge our efforts on the unqualified assertion that trichothecene toxins must be responsible for reports of chemical attacks in Laos and Kampuchea."

DURING THE YEAR FOLLOWING HAIG'S CHARGES against the Soviets the United States bolstered its evidence with samples of blood and urine taken from Khmer Rouge soldiers who said they had been attacked with chemical weapons. Mirocha reported finding trichothecenes, although only traces, in these samples. A second independent analyst, Joseph Rosen, a food scientist at Rutgers University, reported another positive test on a sample of yellow powder, said to have been scraped off foliage inside Laos in May of 1981 by a Hmong resistance team. The sample was given to an American, Charles Whitney, then a hospital administrator at Ban Vinai camp. He brought the sample back to the United States and gave it to an ABC-TV documentary team, which asked Rosen to analyze it. Rosen reported that the yellow sample contained a combination of the three toxic trichothecenes DON, DAS, and T-2, in concentrations of roughly 50 ppm each. He also reported, for the first time, the presence of a man-made substance called polyethylene glycol, or PEG, a common soapy compound, which, Rosen suggested, could have been a dispersant for the poisons. The ABC film highlighted the PEG discovery as evidence against a natural origin for the poisons.

By the end of 1982 the State Department claimed that its evidence of trichothecene use in Southeast Asia was conclusive. And, for the first time, the government said it had physical evidence of the use of trichothecenes in Afghanistan. Adding unexpected drama to a State Department press conference on yellow rain in November of that year, U.S. officials unveiled a small plastic cabinet containing a Soviet gas mask from Afghanistan. As photographers snapped pictures of the mask, Robert Dean, the deputy director of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, said that positive tests reported by three labs—including Mirocha's

and the Army lab at Aberdeen—on two Soviet gas masks were “conclusive” evidence that the Soviets had been using trichothecenes in Afghanistan.

Such was the force of the official assertions that the American media, without further inquiry, immediately sounded more convinced than before of the validity of the government’s charges. *The Washington Post*, which had been lukewarm on the evidence, said, “It seems to us now, however, that the administration has proven out the Soviet pattern by a standard that reasonable people would accept.” *The New York Times*, which had been and would remain more skeptical than most newspapers, declared, “If the case is still inconclusive, it is stronger. It cannot be shrugged off by the Russians.” The government’s most faithful media ally in the yellow-rain saga, *The Wall Street Journal*, said that the implication for arms control was clear. “If you accept the fact of yellow rain [which *The Journal* had always done], it seems to us, you have to ask whether we have anything to talk to these people about.”

Matthew Meselson, on the academic sidelines, had been watching with deepening concern as the government’s allegations provided those in the Administration who opposed arms-control treaties with increasingly good reasons for refusing even to try to negotiate such pacts with Moscow. Also, the United States had arrived at a crossroads in deciding what to do with its own arsenal of chemical weapons: the new Reagan defense team wanted to apply their peace-through-strength policy to chemical weapons by pushing ahead with the production of a new generation of nerve-gas weapons. At the end of the Carter Administration, Meselson, in a report to the government, had argued against such a move, saying there was no pressing need for the new weapons to give the United States a means to retaliate against—and thus to deter—a chemical attack. Instead, the present chemical stockpile should be maintained and upgraded. Reagan officials paid no heed.



AS MESELSON LOOKED MORE CLOSELY AT THE GOVERNMENT’S scientific evidence, and as more of it accumulated, he became increasingly skeptical. The number of samples reported to be positive for trichothecenes was tiny compared with the number of samples collected. By the end of November, 1982, out of more than

350 samples that were, as the State Department put it, “of greatly varying types and utility for analytical purposes,” only six environmental samples—five analyzed by Mirocha and one by Rosen—plus sixteen blood and urine samples had been reported positive. An overwhelming number showed no signs of trichothecenes. There was also a dispute over the government’s assertion that the concentrations and combinations of trichothecenes reported by Mirocha’s laboratory were unnatural. Scientific studies indicated that both the concentrations and the combinations might be found naturally. The study of mycotoxins was still a young, rapidly evolving science. A cautious scientist might consider it hazardous to make any definitive statements about the natural occurrence of mycotoxins.

In fact, as fast as the government’s new evidence emerged, its significance as material scientific proof of the use of trichothecenes faded. The Afghanistan gas masks were billed as major discoveries, and they were the first pieces of military equipment from any battle area, including Southeast Asia, to contain trichothecenes. However, one of the masks was quietly dropped as material evidence. It was said to have been taken from a dead Soviet soldier in Afghanistan, but tests were not conclusive, only “indicative of the presence of trichothecenes”—a result that carried little weight among government investigators. As for the second mask, there was no evidence that it had ever been used in battle. It was said to have been bought in Kabul in a “special operation,” and only the outside of the mask was contaminated. If it had been worn in combat, as the State Department had suggested, the filter should have been contaminated too. No one could be sure that it had not been lying in a sack of moldy corn, or been otherwise contaminated, before it was obtained.

Similar doubts and uncertainties surrounded the post-mortem of a Khmer Rouge soldier named Chan Mann, who, the State Department reported, had been caught in a toxic-chemical attack by Vietnamese artillery on February 13, 1982, near the village of Tuol Chrey, on the Thai-Kampuchean border. A month later Chan suddenly became feverish, restless, and slightly jaundiced. He lapsed into a coma and died. According to the State Department, Khmer Rouge doctors, assisted by Dr. Gary Humphreys, of Canada’s Department of National Defense, performed an autopsy. Tissue samples were sent to Chester Mirocha, who found T-2 (in parts per billion as opposed to parts per million) in Chan’s stomach and intestine, and a metabolite, or secondary product, HT-2, in his heart, stomach, and intestine. Joe Rosen also found T-2, but not HT-2, in Chan’s body tissues. However, Canadian scientists who analyzed Chan’s tissues found no trichothecenes. In fact, the Canadians could not even agree that Chan had died of trichothecene poisoning. They attributed his sudden death to acute kidney failure and terminal waterlogging of the lungs—symptoms consistent with a severe attack of *Falciparum* malaria, commonly known as blackwater fever.

Among these unsatisfactory and inconclusive pieces of

evidence was one intriguing fact, which the State Department made public, almost as an aside, at the November, 1982, press conference. The environmental samples of yellow material from Southeast Asia contained pollen. Four other countries—Australia, Britain, Canada, and Thailand—had found pollen and had informed U.S. investigators as early as January of 1982. The American analysts had missed pollen altogether in their analyses.

The presence of pollen had great potential—for either supporting or undermining the government's case. If the pollen came from local trees or plants, this would suggest a local, natural origin for the yellow spots offered by the refugees. If it was from vegetation exclusive to the Soviet Union, then the United States had vital evidence fitting Haig's original charges.

Aberdeen had no resident pollen experts—or palynologists, as they are called—and Joan Nowicke, a palynologist at the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, was asked to help. She spends a lot of her time painstakingly identifying and cataloguing grains of pollen from the quarter of a million types of flowering plants that exist worldwide. One day in October of 1982 the quiet, almost monastic, work life in Nowicke's laboratory was disrupted by the arrival of three government yellow-rain investigators. They brought photographs of pollen grains from samples of yellow rain from Southeast Asia and asked Nowicke to identify them. She told them that nothing in palynology happened that fast. She recalls, "I had to explain to them how long it takes to make identifications, particularly as they were hoping that the pollen would be distinctive enough that it could be easily identified as belonging to a plant very narrowly distributed—in Leningrad, for example." But the investigators were out of luck: the pollen they showed Nowicke was from daisies and grasses. "Plants you find all over the world," Nowicke told them. The identification of other pollen types might take time, she advised—perhaps as long as six months.

But the government decided not to wait. Its investigators were already confident that they understood. The yellow pollen matched the yellow color of the new chemical weapon described by the refugees, and the government suggested that the pollen could act as the carrier for the trichothecenes. After the sticky poisonous rain hit the ground, so the theory went, it dried and could be inhaled. The size of the pollen grains—between ten and twenty microns in diameter—was claimed to be the right size for retention in the lung tissue. "It's a very clever mixture," Sharon Watson told reporters. No one asked the obvious question: Where did the pollen come from? Instead, Gary Crocker, a State Department intelligence analyst, volunteered that the pollen was of a type that "would be commercially collected by insects, the type of thing a honeybee would take from flowers." Crocker's assertions were made with such confidence that no one even asked why the Soviets would use pollen as a carrier or, indeed, how the huge amounts of pollen needed might have been collected.

MATTHEW MESELSON AND A BRITISH COLLEAGUE, Julian Perry Robinson, were fascinated by the presence of pollen, however. Robinson is Britain's leading independent chemical-warfare expert, deceptively shy and retiring compared with the animated Meselson, but highly regarded in academic and government circles on both sides of the Atlantic.

Alerted by the government to the presence of pollen in "most of the samples," Meselson and Robinson, as Darwin would surely have done, began to look for a possible natural explanation for the presence of pollen. Could the tiny yellow spots have formed on the leaves by a natural process? they asked. Pollen is distributed in two ways—by winds and thermal currents and by insects, primarily bees. Gary Crocker had said that the pollen in the yellow-rain spots was not of the windborne variety but rather of the type that a honeybee would take from flowers. Was he correct? Could bees make tiny yellow spots on leaves?

In the spring of 1983 Meselson helped to organize the first conference on yellow rain, at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Thirty-four persons attended, among them some of the key players on both sides of the yellow-rain affair. It was the first time the opposing sides had met for a round-table discussion. There was no contemporaneous report of the meeting in the media, because Meselson had insisted that the conference be closed to the press so that the participants could speak freely. The transcript, which I obtained later, runs to 166 pages of single-spaced type.

The first step to unlocking the pollen mystery came at this conference from a Harvard botanist, Peter Ashton, a genial Englishman with a colonial air who had lived in the Far East for fifteen years before coming to Harvard and who was an expert on tropical flora. In a sample of yellow-rain spots analyzed by the Australians, Ashton had noted that the pollen grains were too highly concentrated to have been windborne and that the pollen came from grasses and weeds, and from trees and shrubs common to Indochina. The pollen of all these plants is collected by bees—but Ashton could not explain how the bees turned the pollen into little yellow spots that stuck to leaves and pebbles. Perhaps they ate pollen and regurgitated it, he suggested to his colleagues. To be sure, it seemed farfetched, even ridiculous, but *could* the yellow-rain drops that Hmong refugees and others said were chemical agents be the vomit of bees?

Later Ashton described the yellow spots to Tom Seeley, a bee expert from Yale, who immediately replied, "I don't think the State Department's interpretation of these yellow spots is the most parsimonious one. This sounds to me like bee cleansing flights"—communal excursions during which tens of thousands of bees fly at a height of about fifty feet and defecate tiny yellow spots, each containing hundreds of thousands of digested pollen grains. Seeley explained that when he used to keep beehives on the roof of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard, the

staff members who kept their cars in the parking lot complained about the little yellow spots that appeared on their vehicles. Each spring, when it was warm enough, the worker bees emerged from hibernation with their guts full of the indigestible husks of pollen grains—sometimes up to a dozen different pollen types, because one hive's pollen store contains the results of weeks of forages all thrown together. Seeley did not know, however, whether bees go on cleansing flights in the tropics, where the narrower temperature ranges mean that bees don't hibernate, as their northern relatives do. (That question would eventually be answered by an expedition to Thailand, during which Meselson and Seeley were rained on by honeybees on a cleansing flight.)

In the meantime Meselson busied himself by scraping some bee feces from windshields in the parking lot beside his Harvard laboratory. He found that they contained up to eight different types of pollen grains, plus bee hairs and the wispy filaments of fungus spores. Excited by the new hypothesis, Meselson took these samples and the yellow-rain samples he had now collected from the Australians, the Canadians, and Rosen to Joan Nowicke for pollen identification. She had never heard of bee cleansing flights, so Meselson invited her to take a look at the Smithsonian parking lot—where they found at least fifty yellow spots of bee feces on Nowicke's car. She agreed to help.

THE BEE THEORY OF YELLOW RAIN WAS OFFICIALLY unveiled by Meselson and Seeley on May 31, 1983, at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, in Detroit.

Meselson and Seeley showed two sets of photographs of pollen grains—from an alleged sample of yellow rain collected in Thailand and from bee feces found on a chokecherry leaf in Massachusetts. The similarity was startling. Next they pointed out that of the six environmental samples from Southeast Asia (including Rosen's ABC-TV sample) reported to contain high levels of trichothecenes, three had been examined for pollen—and in each case pollen had been found. Of six additional samples of yellow deposits said to be the chemical agent—four examined by the Australian defense department and two by United Nations investigators—all contained pollen. Thus, whenever analysts had looked for pollen in yellow-rain samples, including those that were reported to contain trichothecenes, they had found it. And not just traces; the samples were all made up largely of pollen.

In the coming months Meselson would add more important evidence confirming that the spots were bee droppings. And, at the Smithsonian, Nowicke found that honey collected in Thailand contained the same types of pollen as the alleged samples of yellow rain. Also, the pollen found in yellow-rain samples was hollow, indicating that bees had digested the protein and excreted the indigestible pollen husks.

In short, Meselson and his colleagues had proved that





Alan C. Che

THREE POEMS

BY JAMES GALVIN

GENESIS

Not in wilderness to beguile them
 But in a garden, which is wilderness beguiled.
 Not in reason but in temptation.
 Not in compassion but in judgment.
 Not for better and not for worse.
 Not for an idea.
 Not for the atom that cracks, the flower that opens,
 Not for the newspaper bursting into flame,
 The ultimate nail, driven in. Not for love,
 Not on their lives,
 Whose relative happiness or virtue
 It was not for,
 Not for, not for, not for.

ABOUT

Facts about the iris
 Do not make the iris open.
 Open your eyes.
 It's tomorrow.
 Call out for someone.

RIDDLE

It's a nail of black water driven deep
 And broken off deep in.
 It's a lens that stars resolve in,
 Like a telescope so strong
 It sees through the earth's center, sees stars
 On the far side
 More imaginable, somehow, than those above,
 And the last cigarette
 In your delicate and mortal hand
 Traverses that heaven again and again
 Like a lovesick planet that hasn't got a hunch
 How black the nail, how deep the water,
 Holding these reflections up to us.

the yellow material handed in by the refugees was in fact bee feces.

Even though Meselson, Seeley, and Nowicke had not produced evidence of the natural occurrence of trichothecenes to explain Mirocha's findings, they had embarrassed the government with their exemplary inquiry. By way of a reply, State Department officials sought to ridicule the work of these meddlesome academics, dismissing it as "The Great Bee Caper." At a press conference in Washington on June 1, 1983, Alan Romberg, the State Department's deputy spokesman, explained where he considered that Meselson's inquiry had erred.

One of the positive yellow-rain powder samples, from Laos, had weighed 300 milligrams. This was "certainly more than a bee could drop," Romberg said. And, even if the sample had been bee feces, the bee would have died before excreting it, because the trichothecenes it contained would have been fatal.

To the layperson this rebuttal might have sounded conclusive, but, as the State Department's own evidence showed, the 300-milligram sample had never been a single yellow spot. The yellow substance had fallen to earth "like an insect spray," according to the refugee who had witnessed the alleged attack in Laos in March of 1981. The material did not fall to earth in a lump. The spray had dried to a powder and villagers had managed to scrape some of it off a rock and carry it through the jungle to Thailand. Also, Meselson had never suggested that bee feces still inside the gut of a bee would contain trichothecenes; he had said quite clearly that if the yellow spots were indeed the source of the poisons, as the refugees said they were, and the reported amounts of the poisons in the yellow feces were correct, the poisons would somehow have had to have been added, either naturally or by the intervention of man, after the bee had defecated.

The British magazine *Nature* commented in an editorial, "In presenting his theory last week, Meselson went through the exercise of listing where the evidence supports his theory and where it contradicts it. The State Department seems not to have taken the hint; nor did it admit that it should define the areas where questions remain. . . . To judge from what State Department spokesmen have been saying, Meselson's hypothesis is regarded as a threat, not as a legitimate question."

If Meselson was a threat, it was not because he might prove that trichothecenes could be found naturally in bee feces. Rather, Meselson was threatening because he was applying standards of scientific evidence that the government had never adopted.

In October, Stuart Schwartzstein, an ex-foreign-service officer then running a chemical-weapons project at the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, organized a round-table discussion of problems of collecting and analyzing the yellow-rain evidence. Present were Meselson, Rosen, and Mirocha. Mirocha had not seen Meselson since the congressional hearings in November, 1981, and he had been openly critical of the bee theory, calling it "ridiculous and

even absurd." Schwartzstein took the three professors to dinner. "I might as well not have been there," Schwartzstein said later. "Meselson was so busy cross-examining the other two about their positive trichothecene findings, I never had a chance to say anything." In this conversation and in a subsequent discussion with Emery Sarver, the chief of the Army's methodology research branch at Aberdeen, Meselson learned that Sarver had analyzed sixty environmental samples from alleged attack sites in Southeast Asia and had found no trichothecenes in any of them—even though Sarver's laboratory had used a GC-MS, the same kind of machine that Mirocha used—and even though the detection limit of the machine should have allowed Sarver to identify trichothecenes in concentrations 1,000 times lower than the average concentrations reported by Mirocha.

Sarver's samples had included ten of yellow powder, ten of water, and forty of foliage, some of which had contained yellow spots or powder. One of these samples—the now famous 300-milligram sample of yellow powder mentioned by Alan Romberg—had been tested by both Mirocha and Sarver, Meselson learned. In October, 1981, Mirocha reported finding 143 ppm of T-2 and 2 ppm of DAS. He did not look for pollen. A year later Sarver tested a portion of the same sample. He looked for pollen and found it, but he found no trichothecenes at all. Mirocha said later, "I really can't speak for the handling of samples in Dr. Sarver's laboratory. Our methods of extraction are based on fifteen years' experience. I can't expect Dr. Sarver just to go in there and conquer all the analytical problems. His area of expertise had been some of the nerve gases and they [the Aberdeen staff] are very good at things like that. This is all new to them."

"For me this was the turning point of the whole inquiry," Meselson said later. "It finally convinced me that the government did not really have a case to answer." On October 19, 1983, Meselson wrote a letter to Mirocha and Rosen setting out his findings and asking, "Why does Sarver find no positives out of about 60 samples from Southeast Asia and Mirocha plus Rosen find six out of six? In particular, why does Sarver find no T-2 and Mirocha find 143 ppm of T-2 in aliquots of the same sample? The apparent difference corresponds to a factor of more than one thousand between what Mirocha reports and what Sarver presumably could have detected. Is this a false negative, a false positive, or are both labs right?"

This is the scientist's way of asking whether Sarver's analytical procedures had failed to produce the right answer (a false negative) because he had used the wrong methods of analysis, or whether Mirocha's and Rosen's laboratories might have been contaminated with trichothecenes (a false positive), or whether some entirely different compound had mimicked the chemical signature of T-2 in Mirocha's and Rosen's laboratories but not in Sarver's (another false positive). "This all seems quite baffling," Meselson wrote. "What do you make of it and what do you think should be done?"

OF COURSE, MESELSON WAS SPEAKING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL samples, and the government still claimed that it had further, and equally important, evidence of trichothecene poisoning from the samples of blood and urine. In January, 1984, the weekly magazine *Chemical and Engineering News*, published by the American Chemical Society, ran a thorough twenty-seven-page article by Lois Ember, a staff reporter, criticizing the scientific basis of the government's case. For the first time—and, it should be noted, not in the popular media—the inconsistencies in the government's laboratory results which Meselson had found received an airing. Ember also looked at the government's results from the samples of blood and urine, and she discovered that of sixty samples analyzed, twenty had been reported to contain traces of trichothecenes, but, again, Mirocha was the only analyst to find the poisons. Two of his twenty positives had been designated tentative findings because he had not had enough material to run a full analysis. The significance of the eighteen other positives was placed in doubt by the State Department's own early qualifications regarding the biomedical tests: "Little is known concerning the rate of metabolism of trichothecenes in humans. . . . T-2 is rapidly cleared from the blood in animals, and 25 per cent of the total dose is excreted within 24 hours after exposure; it is unlikely that trichothecenes could be detected unless blood samples were obtained within 24–48 hours after an attack." Yet positive samples had been collected from one to ten weeks after what were alleged to be attacks. The government now claims that its most recent studies show that T-2 can be stored in human beings in a tissue reservoir that releases the poisons over a longer period, perhaps weeks. However, these experiments are not conclusive, and they have not been released to the public for independent examination.

In February of 1984 the government reported to the United Nations that the use of trichothecenes had eased and that although "toxic-weapon attacks, deaths, and incapacitation" continued to be reported, there appeared to have been a "diminution of attacks in Afghanistan and a decrease in the lethality of attacks in Laos and Kampuchea." The government claimed success: the Soviets, officials argued, had been shamed by the yellow-rain publicity into ending violations of international law.

But skeptics had already identified in the government's inquiry a continual use of untenable assertions, tendentious logic, omissions, inconsistencies, and flawed methodology. And a few of them did not hesitate to make harsh judgment.

Nicholas Wade, an editorial writer for *The New York Times*, followed Ember's article with a signed editorial calling the government's science "shoddy." "Every eighth-grader can profit from study of the Government's case," he wrote. "It's a trove of erroneous scientific reasoning. . . . Science is founded on careful observation. Aristotle said men had more teeth than women, but he didn't look. The U.S. government bellowed that yellow rain was a toxin,

sure proof of Soviet perfidy, but didn't look to see what else yellow rain might contain."

Wade listed the basic rules of scientific inquiry that had been broken: A difficult test or measurement must be repeated by a second scientist, just in case the first did it wrong—a reference to the failure to duplicate Mirocha's positive results. Science is cumulative; to ignore what's on the record is to build on air—a reference to the government's repeated and, as it turned out, erroneous claim that trichothecenes could not be found in Southeast Asia. Controls must be properly matched or conclusions are invalid—when skeptics suggested that the positive blood and urine samples could indicate that the "victims" had eaten moldy food, the government retorted that its "control" samples, taken at the same time from people who had not been exposed, were negative. But the government had failed to verify that the people from whom the controls were taken were eating the same food as the victims, thus voiding the comparison. The CIA was so concerned about Wade's criticism that it sent a delegation to the *Times* to argue the government's case, but to no avail. Among American newspapers the *Times* remained the toughest critic of the government's case.

In fact, not only the scientific evidence but also some of the key supporting evidence from intelligence sources is troublesome. For example, despite the confidence with which the charges were made against the Soviets, the U.S. government has been unable to produce a single munition or shell fragment contaminated with trichothecenes. And when Sharon Watson reported her original diagnosis of yellow rain as trichothecene poisoning, she included as evidence a 668-page Second World War intelligence report of interrogations of Soviet prisoners of war by a German chemical warfare expert named Walter Hirsch. According to Hirsch, the prisoners had described a powdery "yellow-brown" agent under development by the Soviet army. The prisoners called the agent *lebeda*, which the Hirsch report referred to as "a millet-like plant which in hard times is mixed with breadstuff. The bread made from it is often harmful and develops [sic] symptoms of poisoning." A 1983 CIA Special National Intelligence Estimate on yellow rain commented that this was "an indirect reference no doubt to the trichothecene contaminated millet that caused the devastating outbreaks in Orenburg." Yet Hirsch was never that definite about the specific properties of *lebeda*.

In his report Hirsch noted that "careful investigations showed that it was possible to interpret these bits of information [from the Soviet prisoners] in different ways" and that some of the symptoms of *lebeda* mentioned could be caused by extant chemical agents, particularly phosgene oxime, also known as "nettle gas" (which also causes many of the symptoms mentioned by the refugees). Hirsch said that a "plausible hypothesis" was that *lebeda* was a Soviet code designation for phosgene oxime. "More accurate information was not obtainable," he concluded.

THE GOVERNMENT, BY AND LARGE, GOT AWAY WITH its "shoddy" evidence for several reasons. For one thing, history has taught us, painfully and shamefully, the severe penalties for ignoring what at first appear to be exaggerated reports of mass human suffering. Most Americans were ready to believe the refugee reports; they were also inclined to believe that the Soviets are not only capable of using but also likely to use hideous chemical weapons. Such a receptive audience accepted standards of evidence lower than were required by the minority willing to examine the doubts that had been raised.

It should be noted that the Soviets did not endear themselves to this minority by offering a farfetched theory that the presence of trichothecene toxins in Southeast Asia was the result of U.S. policies in Vietnam. According to this theory, the Americans had artificially seeded elephant grass in areas deforested by their use of herbicides and napalm during the war. The grass created new breeding grounds for toxin-producing *Fusarium*, and the prevailing winds carried clouds of spores into Kampuchea and Laos. No one in the West took the theory seriously. "Science fiction," scoffed Paul Nelson, a plant pathologist at Pennsylvania State University.

Another reason for the success of the government's case was imbedded in the technical complexity of the science relevant to trichothecenes—even in the name itself. Which popular newspaper or television station would have considered devoting space or time to the following nugget of official scientific jabberwocky? One effect of trichothecene poisoning known to persist for several weeks after exposure is a depressed white-cell count in the blood. In a January, 1982, press release the State Department reported that a "trend" toward depressed white-cell counts had been observed in alleged victims of a chemical attack in Kampuchea. Two sentences further on the release said, "However, sampling size was so limited that there was no real statistical difference between control and exposed groups." This last sentence automatically voids the trend mentioned previously. Nevertheless, the government again mentioned the trend in a special yellow-rain report two months later, thus leaving the erroneous impression that there was indeed something odd about the white-cell count of alleged victims of yellow rain.

The Administration is justified in claiming a measure of success for its own political strategy, even a propaganda coup. Since Secretary of State Haig's speech newspapers across the country have carried scores of banner headlines and leading articles basically in support of the government's case. But the Administration has also succeeded in embarrassing itself and American science. The level at which the charges were made—up to and including the President himself—blocked any respectable avenue of retreat once the government's science was found to be faulty. America's allies, especially its closest ally, Britain, have known for some time that the United States simply did not have the scientific evidence to back up its charges. Government scientists in these allied countries have witnessed

the United States bend the rules of scientific investigation to its own political advantage, in a manner that can only harm the credibility of future charges of treaty violations against the Soviets.

And what is one to make of Mirocha's analysis of environmental samples? It is, indeed, an oddity, because the government's own scientists could not duplicate it. But how did the poisons get into any of the yellow material, if not through chemical warfare? Several suggestions have been aired. One is that the fungus had infested bee feces and produced trichothecenes. It is known from laboratory tests that *Fusarium* fungus can feed off bee feces. Since people do not intentionally eat bee feces, how could the poisons get into the blood and urine of the alleged victims? Perhaps the alleged victims ate moldy grain? Among other things, Meselson has asked whether Mirocha could have been getting false readings in his analyses. Or whether the samples could somehow have been contaminated en route to or inside Mirocha's laboratory. None of these suggestions has led anywhere, and the mystery remains.

The government still insists, in public, that the fungal poisons found by Mirocha came from a chemical-warfare agent. In private, however, officials have been retreating. In place of the confident assertions of 1981 and 1982 that the riddle of yellow rain had been solved, officials now talk among themselves about identifying the "knowledge gaps" in their investigations. In a June, 1984, report from Fort Detrick, Sharon Watson wrote, "The most critical knowledge gap remaining in the yellow-rain investigation is the identification of the other components of the agent." She said "speculation abounds" as to what these other components may be.

Few now doubt that if the government had discovered bee droppings during its preliminary analysis, its inquiry could have taken a different and more productive course. For one thing, government analysts would have been spared the fruitless task of examining hundreds of yellow spots on leaves. For another, the inquiry could have been directed toward a more professional analysis of what the refugees were saying. Some officials concede that the yellow-rain inquiry took on a life of its own; it became impossible to tell from refugee accounts whether the attacks were increasing or decreasing. Finally, if the government's claim that harassing agents had been used was true, there could have been a serious attempt to investigate the extent of the harmful effects of the Vietnamese army's use of these supposedly non-lethal weapons.

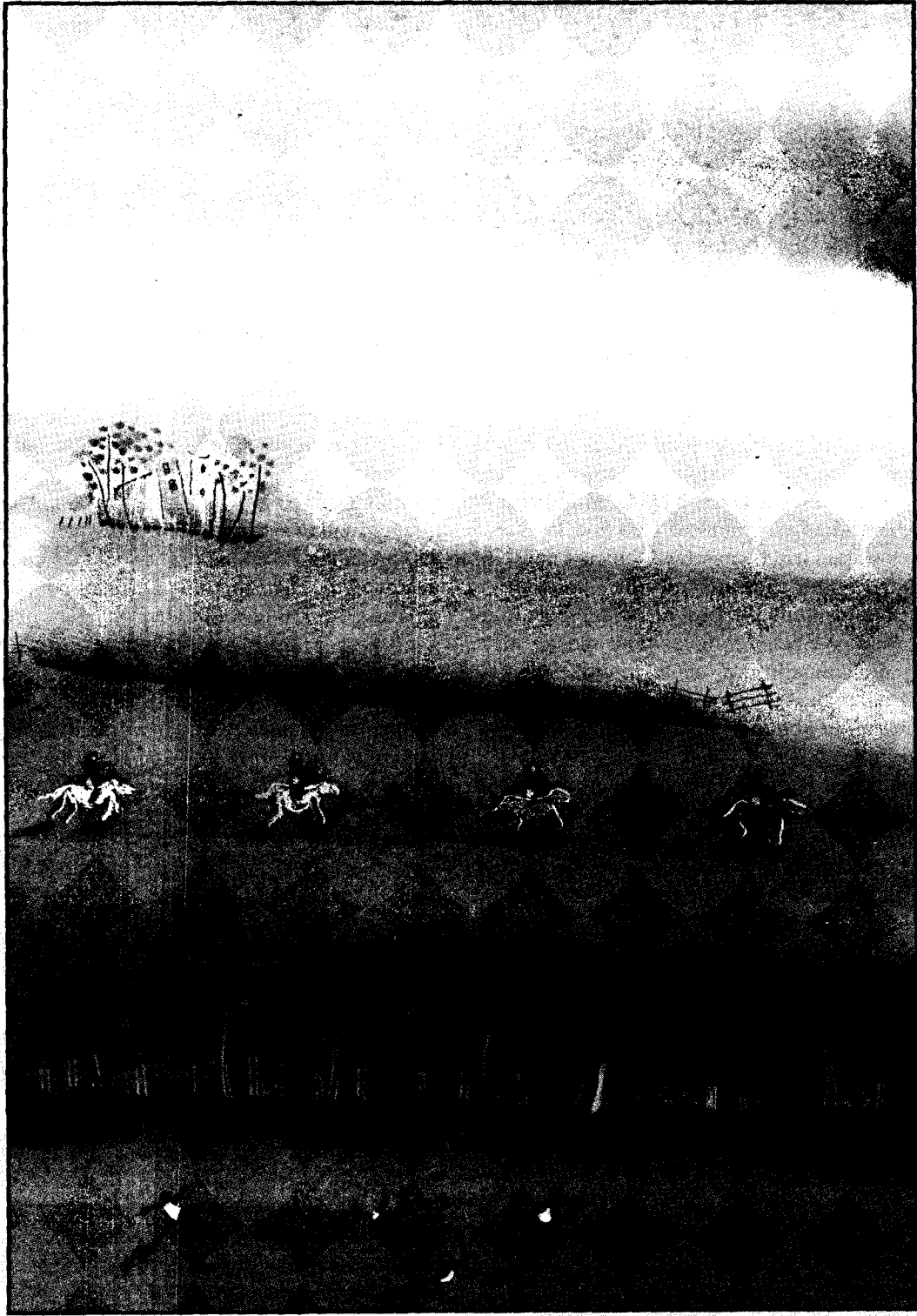
According to some sources, American-made canisters containing CS, a non-lethal riot-control gas, which were presumably from stocks left behind in Vietnam, and Czech-made harassing-agent munitions have been found on Southeast Asian battlefields. That the very old and the very young are frequently reported among the victims of yellow rain is important evidence in this respect. Chemi-

cal-warfare experts estimate that very heavy or prolonged exposure to riot-control agents would almost certainly cause permanent lung damage and death, especially among infants, ill persons, and the aged.

But it is impossible to say if anyone died from riot-control gases. According to the published evidence, no Western doctor has examined—or even seen from a distance—a single one of the bodies of the thousands of people who were reported by the refugees to have died from chemical attacks. The charge that the Soviets used trichothecenes diverted attention from the special political problems that the United States has in condemning others' use of herbicides and, in particular, harassing agents. Whether the Geneva Protocol outlaws harassing agents and other chemical incapacitants has long been a subject of dispute, and is one that will surely be part of any discussions in Geneva about a new chemical-weapons treaty. The U.S. view has been that these agents should not be regarded as subject to the treaty's otherwise all-embracing prohibition against the use of poisonous weapons, because the United States has wanted the freedom to use them. When nations were canvassed for their views on the subject at a League of Nations Commission in 1930, Britain, Canada, China, France, and the Soviet Union took the position that all gases, including harassing agents, should be prohibited, but reserved the right to use tear gas for police purposes.

The question came up again in 1965, because the United States was using harassing gas, mostly CS, in Vietnam—for "humanitarian" purposes, the Pentagon said. Secretary of State Dean Rusk explained that its use could reduce noncombatant deaths in riot-control situations, which were the only times it would be used. This statement was later shown to be erroneous; there was no such military directive. By mid-1969 about 7,000 tons of CS had been used in Vietnam—enough to fill more than 200 million CS cartridges of the type that the British were beginning to use in Northern Ireland. United Nations Secretary General U Thant urged—not for the first time—that the Protocol be interpreted to prohibit the use of all chemical agents in warfare, but the United States and Britain continued to use them.

A 1969 government consultant's report outlining the U.S. position on incapacitants warned, "The further hazard in our employment of incapacitating chemicals in war, particularly when done on a large scale in conjunction with ordinary military operations, is that it stimulates other nations to initiate or expand their own programs for chemical (and possibly germ) weapons and erodes restraints on their use. Even if the first result is only the deployment of harassing agents on both sides in a future conflict, the introduction of weapons, defenses, and logistic arrangements all suited to chemical warfare would facilitate the progression to more powerful and deadly agents." The consultant was Matthew Meselson. □



A Short Story



DEATH OF THE NATION

BY ERNST HAVEMANN

IN MY BOYHOOD EVERY SMALL WHITE BOY ON A FARM IN Natal had a black companion, an "umfaan." The umfaan was usually three or four years older than the white boy, so that he could take care of his charge and carry him piggyback when necessary. My umfaan was called Fakwes. His real name was Ukufakwezwe, "The Death of the Nation," because he was born at the time of an epidemic that killed a great many people, including his father.

He was ten or eleven when he came to work on my family's farm, which meant that he had had five or six years as a herdboyc, spending all day every day in the veld with the other boys of his family. He knew the name of every bird, every little animal, even every insect we came across, and he knew what one should do about each of them—which bees sting and which merely buzz, how to salute the praying mantis, and what to cry out to the nightjar when it suddenly flies up and then flops down invisible in deep shadow. (You say, "*Savolo, savolo*, milk for my people.")

We collected quails' eggs, flying ants, and small white tubers and roasted them on the lid of a cast-iron pot. We hunted cane rats and lizards and helped herd the cattle. Sometimes we went with one of Fakwes's relatives to visit the native reserve adjoining the farm. We took salt, tobacco, and matches as gifts, and perhaps a beer bottle of lard, liquid in the heat. We were received ceremoniously, like adults, and when Fakwes's grandfather took the tobacco, he invited us into his hut, which was very special because of his spears and his big oxhide shield.

An exciting thing happened on one of those visits. On our way home we heard a shout from very far away, then a louder one close by from a man high in a tall tree. He was shouting, "The goats are in the field!" In a moment we saw a boy scramble up the rocks to the top of a little hill and heard him scream, "The goats are in the field!" Fakwes ran to a big tree, climbed up, and shouted the same words. Someone picked up the message, and we could hear it repeated from the next hilltop and then the next, far away.

"Where are the goats?" I demanded. "Shouldn't we run and chase them?"

"You will see the goats in a little while," he said. "They will be riding horses and carrying revolvers."

Some time afterward—I think we had ridden more than a mile—the "goats" appeared. They were two policemen on horseback. Fakwes said that by the time they reached the kraals all the men who did not have passes or poll-tax

receipts would be hiding in deep bush, together with all the unlicensed dogs.

"You have seen a secret thing," he said. "You must never speak of it." He knew that if he said it was secret I would not tell, just as I did not tell when we killed the prize rooster with our catapults. I never did tell, though I felt guilty and anxious whenever a policeman looked directly at me, in case he knew.

My first few school years were in a one-roomer a few miles from our place. I rode a pony to school; Fakwes walked or trotted alongside. Out of sight of adults we both rode, or Fakwes rode and I tried to keep up. When we reached the school, I went into the playground while Fakwes joined the other umfaans and the ponies in the school's field. The umfaans played games of guessing how many pebbles there were under which condensed-milk tin, breaking off to listen to our singing lessons. When we emerged, they would break into "John Peel" or "Land of Hope and Glory," rendering it loudly and perfectly but with a distinctive African flavor.

On the way home I regaled Fakwes with what I had learned that day. After lunch we usually went down to the reservoir to draw in the soft mud left by the receding water. (There must also have been times when the water was rising, but I don't remember them.) There were long, flat, absolutely smooth stretches of yellow ooze. Whatever one scratched on it stayed put while the mud dried and finally cracked into big flat pieces like gigantic slabs of chocolate. Fakwes drew bulls with enormous horns and genitals and cows with long teats. I drew faces and wrote letters. He laughed when I wrote FAKWES and said it was his name. In response he scratched zigzag lines and said they were my name, but after a while he took writing seriously and began to copy letters from my books. He was quicker and neater than I was. He wanted to write his whole, long, real name, but I could not cope with long words and we had to abandon it. He drew one of his fearsome bulls and said, "Let that be the writing for my name."

We had trouble with other Zulu words, because I did not know how to write the click sounds. The teacher said that Zulu was not made for writing, it was for savages, but by the time I left the one-roomer to go to Big School in the village, twenty miles away, Fakwes and I could both read the Zulu on the packets of baby formula at the trading store. It said that baby formula was better than milk.

Once I was at Big School, I saw Fakwes only when I

came home on weekends. Though only fifteen or sixteen, he received a full man's wages, because he could read and write figures and work out piecework tasks and things like that. I brought him a Zulu New Testament, which was the only Zulu book I could find. He was ecstatic. "I shall be as clever as a preacher! I shall know all that he knows, from this Believers' book. But I will not be a Believer." He wrote me a careful letter of thanks in Zulu and signed it with one of his drawings of a bull.

The New Testament was full of place names—Nazareth, Bethlehem, Rome, Ephesus. But where were they? We went through my school atlas. What really gripped him in the atlas was England. He scoffed at the idea that such a small red patch could be the England that had defeated the Zulus, the Boers, and the Germans. His grandfather liked to tell how *his* father had fought at Isandhlwana, where the Zulus wiped out Lord Chelmsford's column, and at Ulundi, where the British broke the Zulus. The withered old man had a deep respect for British soldiers. "They were all heroes," he recounted. "They died without flinching. And they killed without flinching. Like Zulus." He enjoyed the little red-coated lead soldier I brought him, and attached it to the end of a spear.

Fakwes shared his grandfather's admiration for British soldiers but deeply resented settlers. "One day we will take back all this land," he declared. "We will burn the sugarcane and take the horses and cattle and sheep. The farmers will load their trucks and go, go to the south, away from us. I will be a great man in the council of chiefs, because I can read and I know where England is, and Bethlehem. I will write letters for the council of chiefs, and I will live in Armstrong's house." Armstrong, the storekeeper, had a place in the East Indian-colonial style, with little turrets and fretwork lattices, painted what we called coolie pink. "On letters to friends I will draw a bull. And you, my brother"—he put his arm around me—"you will be our adviser. The great chiefs always had a white man to tell them the thoughts and deceptions of the English. We will give you many wives and red Boer cattle with their horns swept back, and a little band of warriors to guard you and greet you with praises. Which house would you like?"

One weekend when I came home, Fakwes was not there. No one knew where he was, and the police were looking for him. A youth with whom he had quarreled at a beerdrink had been found unconscious by the roadside, with a head wound. If he died, the police would probably charge Fakwes with murder. My father let it be known that we would arrange a lawyer if Fakwes turned himself in, but that proviso was unnecessary. The wounded youth recovered and refused to make a complaint—it was a fair fight, he said—and so no charge was recorded against Fakwes. Fakwes nevertheless stayed away. We heard rumors that he had been seen in Durban, and then in Cape Town. About a year after Fakwes disappeared, I received a card with a London postmark. It had a picture of a red-coated soldier. There was no message, only a drawing of a bull with big horns and genitals.

ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO I HAD A VISIT FROM BENNY Miller. He was, and is, an undistinguished lawyer with a drinking problem. Most of his clients appeared to be shopkeepers charged with minor breaches of municipal bylaws, but he had also, surprisingly, appeared in two or three African political trials.

He phoned me one evening at my house. "I didn't want to be seen coming to your office," he said. "Your friends might think you were involved with one of my clients, and that wouldn't do, eh?"

"What do you want?" I snapped.

"I'm representing an old friend of yours. You may be able to help."

I agreed to see him, and within twenty minutes he arrived through the back-yard servants' entrance. He was a plump, sallow man with curly gray hair and a practiced, self-deprecating smile. He accepted a drink, looked around the room, and remarked, "Nice place you have here."

I waited, not concealing my dislike.

"Do you know a man called Mkize? Big fellow, around forty."

I could not recall a black acquaintance by that name.

"He says to tell you the goats are in the field."

"Oh, Fakwes!" I exclaimed. I had forgotten that his clan name was Mkize. "Fakwes. Sure. We grew up together, but I haven't seen him for years. Where is he?"

"In jail. Forged papers and possession of an offensive weapon. But that's just to hold him until they get to the red meat. I think the prosecution is after conspiracy or sabotage or worse. He was abroad a long time and he speaks fluent Portuguese and French."

"French! Fakwes speaks French?"

"Quite educated French, as far as I can judge. He seems to have got around."

"Portuguese and French, eh?" I could not believe it. "Well, how can I help?"

"Perhaps you can't help at all. But if there's no concrete evidence against him, just suspicion, then they might go for detention without trial. In that case character evidence may ease his lot. Someone like you—upright, prosperous, right-wing—could carry weight, perhaps pull a string or two. I understand you have friends in government circles. Well, we all have our weaknesses. I should warn you, though, a dossier is bound to be opened for anyone who's connected with him."

"I'll think it over," I said.

He took it as a refusal. "I don't blame you. Things are never quite the same once you've been mixed up in one of these affairs."

"I'm not mixed up in anything," I protested.

"No? Consider this: You're a friend of a subversive character. He sent you a code message through me, which you obviously understood. Perhaps on your trips abroad you stopped over in Nairobi or Lourenço Marques or Marseilles, where he also happened, just happened, to be at the same time. Adds up. So you're probably wise to turn

your back. Boyhood pals across the color line is one thing—touching, in fact—but in adults it's suspicious."

He rose to go, putting his glass down noisily. I held it up and looked inquiringly.

"I thought you'd never ask," he said, sitting down.

"Can I see Fakwes?"

"How naive can you get!" He threw up his hands. "The man doesn't say 'Can I see the accused?'—or Mkize, or anything like that. No! He uses some kind of pet nickname! How do you suppose you would sound in court? What does it mean, anyway?"

"Fakwes is short for Ukufakwezwe."

"I see. Does Uku-whatever mean anything?"

"It means 'The Death of the Nation.'"

"Christ!" he exclaimed. "Imagine what a prosecutor could make of that in a subversion case! Imagine, The Death of the bloody Nation! 'And which nation were you planning the death of, Mr. Mkize?'"

"Can I see him?" I repeated impatiently.

"I wouldn't advise it," he said seriously. "It would tar you a bit. In case you change your mind, I'd prefer you to stay remote. It would be better for you, too."

"Can I do anything else? Clothes, cigarettes, money? Your fees?"

"Since you ask, since you ask, I'll tell you. I earn my living helping small businessmen who make mistakes. Clients like your friend usually don't have a penny. I handle

them *pro deo*. Naturally, I try to avoid incurring expenses. But even so, there's stationery and postage and official fees. And tobacco for the poor bastards. I try to look after things like that, and perhaps get a wife in from the country to see her husband for the last time. It costs. Of course, it's a mitzvah." He assumed a mock Yiddish manner and spread his palms. "You know vot is a mitzvah? A credit up there." He jerked a thumb at the ceiling. "Mitzvahs I got like Job had boils. But can you mit a mitzvah buy a bottle visky?" He reverted to normal. "You stock an excellent spirit, by the way. Not like some cheapskates, who put away the Black Label and bring out the Japanese when they see me coming."

I refilled his glass and took out my wallet. I like to carry a reasonable amount of cash, and that afternoon I had drawn an extra sum because my wife and I were going to the races the next day. There were always races in Durban on Wednesday afternoons. I took all there was in the wallet and gave it to Benny Miller without counting it.

He weighed it in his palm. "I wish I had a boyhood chum like you," he said. "It's understood that this is an unconditional gift? I use it as I choose, and I don't account for it?"

"I don't know what happened to the money," I replied. "It must have slipped out of my hip pocket in the street when I was tying my shoelace."

He put the money in his pocket. "Okay. But remember

REGATTA

All night beneath the stately turn
of the slooped and schooner'd sky
they rode the star-filled swells

expensively, their halyards chiming,
that now are under jib and spinnaker.
From this hill, this humming top,

it might be ivory knights,
bishops, queens, gowns billowing,
who make their cryptic moves

across the mottled bay.
Overhead, a line of swans,
wings working up the air to whistle,

and this for heraldry—
a blue and silver kite, an osprey,
two redtails rounding out

the sky. How hard to believe
in anything
less heavenly. But there it is—

the dive, direct hit of the hawk,
and sudden tangent
to the nest,

that innerspring of rabbit rib,
shrew skin, quail down,
fox fur.

As for the yachts, the swift
white yachts—
how many among us

must be taken, bone and gut,
that these may be
so sleek?

—Rennie McQuilkin

what I've said. Once you've done something like this, things are never quite the same. As the rabbi says, one mitzvah leads to another." He drained his glass and left.

My wife was horrified when I told her what had occurred.

"You've always told me of your wonderful Zulu friend, the David to your Jonathan," she jeered. "And now, when he might be in jail for the rest of his life and you might get a chance to speak for him, you'll think it over. Think it over! I'm ashamed."

"You'd be more than ashamed if the police came and turned the house inside out, looking for God knows what," I retorted.

I kept telling myself that I didn't owe Fakwes that much. I would have owed him if he had been just an ordinary, or even a rather special, black man, like those I met on the Bantu Welfare Committee. With his brains and a bit of help he could have got more education and perhaps become a teacher, or my head clerk, which would pay better. We would have remained friends. He would come to dinner from time to time. My European friends would recognize that they were being given a special treat if they were invited when he and his wife came. But as it was . . . He had nearly killed that youth years ago, and now it seemed he might be a terrorist. Perhaps he was. When he was a boy, he wanted to take the land back from the settlers. Fancy his learning French! I wondered what he looked like. Was he the same person that I had known twenty-five years ago? I was guiltily certain that if I were a fugitive, he would risk his life for me. Or would he? Several kids with whom I had been friendly at school were now only distant acquaintances, whom I might see at Rotary but not otherwise.

At the races the next day my wife ostentatiously put all her money on Bosom Friend at fifty to one and won. Someone assured us that Beesknees was a certainty for the main race. I backed him without excitement. Fakwes and I used to rob wild bees' nests. We got up early, because in the cold dawn bees huddle together, more or less inactive. We collected twigs and leaves, made a smoky fire, and blew smoke deep into the nest, which was usually a hole in the ground or in a hollow tree. The smoke stupefied the bees. Fakwes always made me stand some distance away while he chopped and dug to get at the honeycombs. He was often stung. I was occasionally stung too, but I learned not to cry out: one of Fakwes's rules was that one was never allowed to cry for pain. I was always the one who carried the honey home, like a conquering hero, while Fakwes stood by, waving an insect-repellent herb and describing how we had located the nest by following the flight of bees from a flowering tree or by listening to the bee-eater. The bee-eater has a very pronounced swallowtail and . . .

"Wake up, dreamy Daniel!" My wife shook my elbow. "When you come to the races, you're supposed to care

which horse wins." She pointed to the board flashing BEESKNEES 12-1. He had won by three lengths.

The next day I phoned Benny Miller. As soon as he heard my voice he said, "I'll ring back" and put down the receiver. Ten minutes later he called from a pay phone.

"My office phone is tapped," he explained. "What's on your mind?"

"I've decided I will be available as a character witness, or do whatever else you think may help."

"Congratulations. Or perhaps you're psychic. Your friend escaped from custody last night. There is the usual loose talk about venal guards. Anyway, I don't suppose you'll see your pal again unless you rendezvous abroad. Well, so long."

About a month afterward I received a postcard from Spain. It showed a black bull, its shoulder bristling with lances, kneeling on a bullfighter. That was all. No message, just the wounded black bull triumphing over its adversary. I burned the card. It is not the sort of thing one wants to keep around.

Benny Miller was in the news a couple of times during the next year. A technicality saved him from conviction on a charge of corrupting a Customs officer, and he was knocked down the courthouse steps by women protesting against his defense of a black girl who had organized a union of nursemaids.

He called me soon after my return from a visit to Europe. He spoke from a phone booth. "Did you have a good trip? See all the old friends you wanted to see? Look, a fund you know of has developed a deficit like the national debt. Would you care to perpetrate a mitzvah?"

We met in a bar. We did not drink together or greet each other, but he picked up an envelope that I left on the counter.

Eight or nine months later he phoned again, soon after the African bus riots. "Miller here. I'm sure you know why I'm calling."

I hesitated, and he said urgently, "Look, man, the bloody goats are in the field, man."

"Okay," I said. "The Four Seasons bar. Tomorrow at six."

"Bless you," he responded. "Thank God for boyhood chums, eh?"

He phones once or twice every year. He now announces himself as "Benjamin" (that is what his friends call him, he explains) and always asks what news I have from abroad. I always answer "Nothing," but he enjoys teasing me with the suggestion that I am connected with an underground movement. I inquire after his health and may refer to a trial in which he is appearing. Then I mention goats, and he makes a little joke about my accumulation of credits "up there." A good act qualifies as a credit even if it is not entirely voluntary, he says. □

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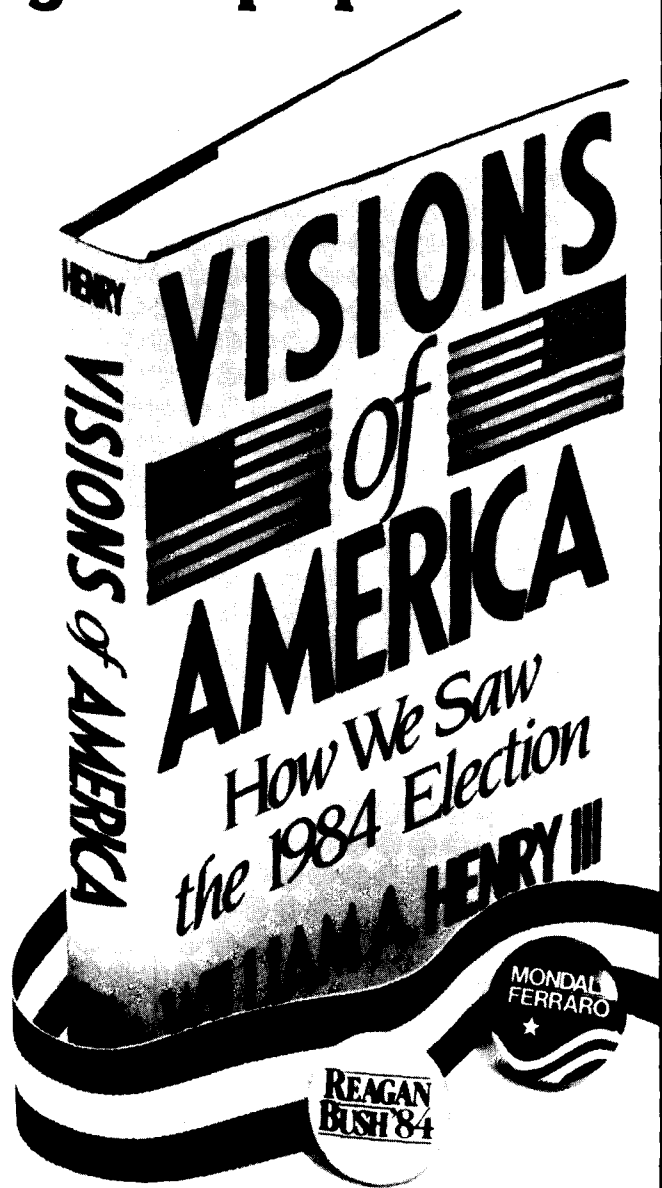
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MOVIES

HEROES WE DON'T DESERVE

BY MICHAEL SRAGOW

THIS IS NOT James Bond's year. *A View to a Kill* was the worst Bond movie ever, and not even the former disco queen Grace Jones could make it last at the box office. The movie gave off an end-of-the-line feeling. A generation of schoolboys grew up repeating brazen, cold Bond wisecracks such as the famous "Shocking, positively shocking," delivered in *Goldfinger* after Bond electrocuted an enemy. The later Bond seems dated and out of it: when his *Kill* playmate dresses in a male miner's uniform, he twinkles and quips, "Women's Lib." In recent months the movie that was winning the cheers and applause that Bond films used to get centered on a witless vulgarian named Rambo. And the character who's being touted as the next James Bond is yet another taciturn American who never wears a dinner jacket, can't pronounce *champagne* much less drink it, and does all his killing with his hands. He carries a name remarkably similar to that of America's favorite rampaging vet: he's called Remo Williams.

Remo, the hero of more than sixty action-adventure paperbacks that have sold over 25 million copies, comes to the screen October 11 in *Remo: The Adventure Begins*, one of the most elaborately promoted movies in the history of Orion Pictures. The distributors hope to turn Remo into the latest secret-agent craze.

Bond to Rambo to Remo: it's a natural progression. Bond was the first cold-blooded killer to be hailed as a savior of the Western world and even touted by a President. (Kennedy was as big a Bond fan as Reagan is a Rambo man.) In the books he sometimes voiced qualms about being a professional executioner; in the movies he took the edge off his killings by uttering witticisms in what Penelope Gilliatt has called "a voice of the age, the voice of sick jokes about the bomb, and gruesomes about Belsen." But Bond's cachet has come increasingly under fire. The glamorous fantasy world of Ian Fleming's international espionage has dulled in the light of attacks on real-

world heartlessness and ineptitude (including attacks in fiction by John Le Carré and Len Deighton). The mechanical hijinks of the Bond series backfired as the gadgetry began to control 007 and as audiences everywhere witnessed the terrors of runaway technology in their own lives. Bond's superhuman status reached the point of



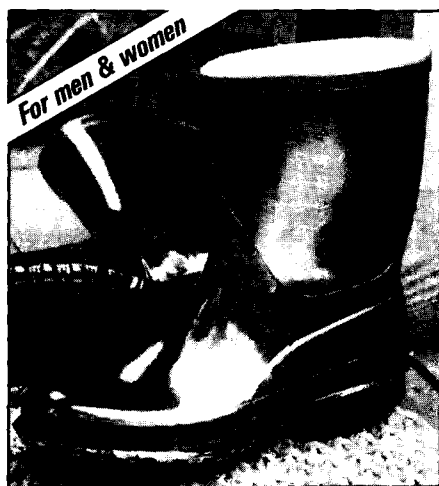
inhumanity when Roger Moore took over from Sean Connery. Even his hedonism has come to seem either mundane or scurrilous in these polarized times, when half the moviegoers are probably as casual as Bond is about sex, and the other half are terrified. The anything-goes recklessness of the Bond series fit an age of affluence and exploding

possibilities; it can't appeal as strongly to audiences who feel jaded or embattled.

Rambo, Remo, and the characters that Chuck Norris plays in movies like *Missing in Action* and *Code of Silence* all perform superman heroics too, but they're sketched as ordinary men who through training and discipline have developed extraordinary powers. These heroes don't have the guilty conscience of Fleming's Bond, the wit of Connery's, or the high style of either. They're simply killing machines on the side of right—Spartans in defense of Athens. Both the book *Goldfinger* and the movie featured a tense, bloodless face-off between Bond and the title villain during a round of golf. When Remo Williams hits the links (in *Death Therapy*, number six of the series), he tears apart a commando squad that tries to trap him on the green.

James Bond's politics rarely roused any controversy: though Bond was on the face of things a conventional Cold Warrior, the films' producers made an effort to do without politics entirely. In contrast, the new he-man movies are being sold as patriotic statements: Uncle Rambo Wants You. But the politics behind Sylvester Stallone's Rambo, the Chuck Norris heroes, and even Remo Williams, who in the comparatively lighthearted *Remo: The Adventure Begins* fights atop the scaffold-encased Statue of Liberty, are the politics not of conservatism but of desperation. Rambo may assault the Vietnamese and the Russians, but it's the U.S. government man who backstabs him, and it's this gutless bureaucrat Rambo really goes after, blowing apart his bank of computers in a gesture worthy of the Luddites. Rambo, like Norris in *MIA*, starts out as a soldier following orders, only to ignore them when they hog-tie him. Remo is a one-man army right from the beginning, fighting all the powers of evil that our armed forces and intelligence agencies seem unable to contain. These movies are telling us not that our country is great but that it doesn't work. Heroes like Rambo and Remo are presented as our only hope—as ludicrous fantasy barriers against chaos and confusion.

The new pop action heroes fight their way out of quagmires created by mixing high technology (including the manipulatable media) with low bureaucracy (whether in the military, the police, or Congress). In that way they're not very different from the more upscale heroes



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of *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai* or the more realistic heroes of *The Right Stuff*. And in most of these movies the heroes seek some otherworldly validation that will help them translate their stoic anxieties into sweeping action. In *Rambo* that theme is implicit in images of Buddha and crucifixion, in the hero's Zen-like prowess with knife and bow-and-arrow, and in the mystic aura that surrounds the scenes in which Rambo uses his dead female helper's hem as a headband, puts her pendant around his neck, and builds her a burial mound worthy of the mighty Thor. In TV's *Rambo* knock-off, *Code of Vengeance*, and especially in the Remo Williams paperbacks, that theme is explicit.

REMO WILLIAMS jumps further than anyone else into Western political confusion and Eastern religion—the politics of desperation and the religion of transcendence. His paperback series is called *The Destroyer*, because Remo is supposed to be the latest incarnation of Shiva, the Hindu god of destruction and reproduction (though Remo gives the latter function short shrift). Warren Murphy and Richard Sapir wrote the first Remo book in 1963, and Pinnacle published it eight years later. Last year the authors and the series moved over to Signet, where the packaging is classier and the books more padded—even the titles tend to be four or five words whereas they used to be two or three. But Pinnacle has kept its fifty-eight books in print (that's quite an array of trash) and has even started an "Author's Choice: Best of *The Destroyer*" series, in which Murphy and Sapir have added pulp versions of Jamesian introductions. Evidently, they believe that the key to the series' success isn't so much the hero himself as his mentor, Chiun. At first glance Chiun seems to be a senile Korean octogenarian; he spends his days watching soap operas and daydreaming about Barbra Streisand. But he's actually the reigning Master of Sinanju, the martial art/religion/discipline that he contends is the source for all lesser martial arts, including karate. It's Chiun who teaches Remo how to use his hands as monkey wrenches and knives, as battle axes and scalpels.

Remo Williams's license to kill is even more absolute than that of James Bond—and so is his brutality. He works not for the Secret Service, the CIA, or the FBI but for a secret intelligence arm called CURE. Indeed, for confidential-

ity's sake, Remo and Chiun are CURE's only enforcers. There are other members, who know that they're doing secret work but not whom it's for. According to the paperbacks, President Kennedy (or, that is, a thinly disguised version of him) formed CURE shortly before his assassination. His goal was to protect the Constitution with a security force so secret and autonomous that it didn't have to operate within constitutional limits. Remo and Chiun's tactics are a bit like those of the American military during Vietnam: they've got to destroy something in order to save it. The Constitution may be a fine document in theory, but the chaos of modern society has enfeebled it. So Remo is empowered to administer justice as swiftly and directly as possible, without regard for due process.

If a judge on the take gives low sentences to major drug offenders, Remo hangs him from a thirteenth-story window until he agrees to change his ways. If Remo catches wind of a terrorist plot hatching in the badlands of Iran, he zips overseas and decapitates one of the culprits with his hands. He's like Rambo on a broader scale: as he does his vigilante work, he's in the U.S. government but not of it. His organization is obsessive about its secrecy to the point that Remo spends almost as much of his time knocking off people who stumble onto CURE's membership list as he does assassinating those who commit overt crimes against the flag. Terrorists, students, and other cartoon images of the left are frequent enemies, but there's no strict political pattern to Remo's victims. Rather the authors assemble their villains on an ad hoc basis.

Murphy and Sapir admit that the series wasn't going well until they started to focus on the legends of Sinanju, in the third Remo novel (*Chinese Puzzle*). It seems clear why. Like the Buddha-cum-Christ symbolism in *Rambo*, Sinanju serves to sanctify the hero's killings. It also provides contrast for the authors' virulent but democratic broadsides against every race, color, and creed, every sexual persuasion, and every socio-politico-economic class. Every foreign country is sniped at, but so is every aspect of America except, in post-1980 installments, Ronald Reagan. Even sex, one of the mainstays of pulp adventure, comes in for rough handling. Chiun ruins lovemaking for Remo by teaching him an advanced vocabulary of erotic zones that reduces the reaching of or-

gasm to a purely mechanical activity. It's the rare woman who wins Remo's hard-boiled affection by proving herself valiant and pure of heart—and she usually gets killed. The flashes of romance function only as additions to Remo's legendary aura: a terrorist student in *Terror Squad* gets a fleeting moment of redemption when she tosses a Kleenex during a fight to serve as Remo's knightly pennant. A minute later she gets her brain bashed. In short, nothing is sacred except Sinanju—and nothing except Sinanju survives.

Chiun's ancient viewpoint lends a timeless backdrop to the everyday challenges of organized criminals and revolutionaries. For example, when cult murders on airlines threaten to cripple American air travel, Chiun expounds on the importance of an open transportation system to any powerful society and recalls the Sinanju assassin who failed to maintain the safety of the ancient Romans' roads and thus save the Empire. Inspired by this font of strength, courage, and wisdom, even the patriotic, selfless Remo sees himself becoming more Sinanju and less American. And the more Sinanju-like he grows when performing an activity like breathing, the less he must indulge in Western pastimes, such as linear thought. In these books it's not America that saves itself—not the vigorous legacy of JFK and not even the grit and determination of Remo, a Vietnam vet and former street cop. Instead, what saves America is a way of life that evolved in a rocky North Korean village where the patriarchs fed their women and children by hiring themselves out to the era's reigning emperors.

In *Rambo* the hero disdains advanced weaponry, mumbling that the best weapon is the mind; in *Code of Silence* the policeman-hero mocks the use of a computerized policing machine until he finds himself with no other ally. In *Remo: The Adventure Begins* the Sinanju warrior takes on the military-industrial complex in miniature, when he investigates a defense manufacturer who's selling flawed and phony goods to the armed forces. Judging from a twenty-five-minute promotional reel designed to intrigue movie exhibitors by giving a taste of the action and the story line, the men who've shaped the first Destroyer film ("America's favorite tough guy comes to the screen in a movie that's big enough to hold him!") have scraped away a lot of Murphy and Sapir's misan-

thropy and built up Remo's Rambo-like status as (to quote the press notes) "a new kind of American hero for the '80s who is just your average guy with just a little bit something more that gives him a mystique all his own." They've also put the most benign slant possible on the politics of CURE (which in the promotional reel isn't even mentioned by name). Remo's agency boss describes his special targets as those corrupt people who "roam the halls of power with impunity." The only pernicious foreign elements to be seen are a trio of vicious Doberman pinschers. The tone is much more genial, humorous, and light than that of most other apocalyptic adventure flicks.

You can't fully appreciate the function of sidekicks in action fiction until you compare Remo and Chiun with Rambo and Rambo. The way Fred Ward plays Remo, he has a wry awareness of the improbability of his own powers. And under a ton of pale yellow makeup Joel Grey plays Chiun as both a cryptic, aloof sage and a harsh but protective parent—an Oriental father and a Jewish mother rolled into one. His way of preening is to say that Remo is coming along in his training and should amount to something soon—perhaps in fifteen years. The movie gives us a taste of his condescension to white folks (which in the book protects Murphy and Sapir from charges of pro-white racism), as when he tells a black American that Remo smells like hamburgers. The relationship of Remo and Chiun allows them to escape the usual superhero isolationism. As Barbra Streisand, Chiun's heroine, put it, people who need people are the luckiest people in the world.

You can get carried along by the exuberance and likability of *Remo: The Adventure Begins*, only to have the despair of the pop mythology underneath it catch up with you the morning after. In the mythology that Remo shares with the dour, inexpressive Chuck Norris and the glowering, narcissistic Sylvester Stallone, heroes use their powers to defend a society that doesn't deserve them. Rambo and Remo are supposed to be average guys who've gotten in shape, but they're not just our representatives in the action, taking our side in the do-or-die power games that decide the fate of the earth. They're the ruthless guardians of Western civilization—our final sentinels of justice. These movies seem to be saying, After Rambo and Remo the deluge. □



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THEATER

WIRED TO MUSIC

BY LLOYD SCHWARTZ

PETER SELLARS, THE new director of the American National Theater, begins his first complete season at the Kennedy Center's Eisenhower Theater this fall with the grenades of controversy still exploding around his ears. *The New York Times* attacked *The Count of Monte Cristo*, his Washington debut last spring, just as it has attacked most of his other major productions. But whatever hostile or bewildered reactions Sellars has accumulated in seventeen years of theatrical experience (he's now twenty-seven)—some clearly provoked by youthful excess and the occasional misfiring—must be seen in the perspective of critical awe and jubilation, awards (including a MacArthur "genius grant"), and SRO signs that have also greeted his extraordinarily original work.

Perhaps one can sympathize with the more conservative members of a Sellars opera audience confronted for the first time with his startling updatings: his modern-dress Mozart and Haydn, with Don Giovanni pulling a switchblade and then banqueting on Big Macs (The New Hampshire Symphony, 1980, designed by Edward Gorey), Armida's enchanted palace overrun with helicopters, M-16s, and Agent Orange (Monadnock Music Festival, 1981), or *Così fan tutte*'s courtly heroes disguising themselves as the Blues Brothers (Castle Hill, 1984); or his hip Handel, with Saul as a proto-Nixon complete with motorcade and tape re-

corder (Cantata Singers, 1981), Orlando as a spacy Cape Canaveral cadet heading for Mars (American Repertory Theater, 1981–1982—possibly the longest run of a Handel opera in history), or Cleopatra dropping in on Julius Caesar from a construction crane near the swimming pool of a bombed-out luxury hotel in the Middle East (PepsiCo Summerfare, SUNY Purchase, 1985).

In Sellars's version of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* (Chicago Lyric Opera, 1983) Nanki-Poo even charges his bribe to Pooh-Bah on an American Express credit card. Such consistently cheeky flamboyance may have distracted audiences from Sellars's more important achievements, many of which seem, to use his word, "wired" to his deep understanding of and dependence on music.

Sellars must be the most musical stage director this country has ever produced. Even his "straight" plays have employed both recordings and live musicians: Sidney Bechet's "Blues in the Air" in Brecht's *The Visions of Simone Machard* (La Jolla Playhouse, 1983), Beethoven, Debussy, and Elmore James in *Pericles* (Boston Shakespeare Company, 1983). Almost the entire two-hour first act of *The Count of Monte Cristo* was uncannily timed to passages (some only a few bars long, some as long as several continuous movements) from Beethoven's Opus 59 String Quartet, the *Serioso*, performed by four musicians at a

far corner of the Eisenhower Theater's vast stage.

"No, no! You shall not die!"—Edmund Dantes's cry to the old Abbé in the dungeon scene of *Monte Cristo* shattered their conspiratorial whispers as dramatically as Beethoven's allegro finale had, at that exact moment, broken the hushed larghetto introduction. The triple pianissimo just before the final coda, shivering under Dantes's triumphant "Saved! The world is mine!", gave the Act One curtain an ominously ironic edge. Such musical interpolations not only heighten the tension or set the tone (often ironic) of a given moment but also help determine the pace and dynamics of an entire sequence and connect that sequence to the rhythmic scheme of the whole production.

Sellars's choice of music shows an impressive grasp of tone and structure. His use, for example, of the rumbling, growling opening theme of the *Serioso* to introduce each terrible new plot twist acknowledged the inescapable element of melodrama in Beethoven. But Sellars also wanted to show the profundity within the melodramatic plot. "In melodrama is the birth of modernism," he wrote in his program note. "In the headlong over-the-top madness of it, the perpetual placement of people and situations in purgatorial extremis, we have the impulse toward pure expressionism." This intense, condensed, "serious" music, in its attitudes about confinement and liberation, linked *The Count of Monte Cristo* with another "serious" Beethoven opus—*Fidelio*.

How deeply and variously Sellars responds to music is, of course, most evident in his musical productions, where we can see him at every moment trying to come to terms with, and to embody, the meaning of notes already there. The



image of Fiordiligi and Dorabella in *Così* waving dry the Polaroids they have just taken of their lovers perfectly captures the fluttery thirty-second notes in the violins that introduce their first duet. The seductively insistent ostinato of Don Giovanni's serenading mandolin is answered and mimicked by the cool indifference of an oscillating electric fan. The heart-easing larghetto lullaby for two violas that soothes Orlando, exhausted after his fit of madness, is mirrored in his being wheeled inch by inch across the stage on a hospital stretcher. "In sweetest harmony they lived." Saul's daughter Michal sends arching out over the bodies of her father and brother; in Sellars's staging, she is lying on her back between them, lifting their limp arms, as Saul's Watergate tape machine unwinds its reel to the music's slow tread and falling cadences. These anachronistic images, witty and moving, are so bound to the score that we don't merely lower our defenses against them but use them to bring ourselves closer to the music.

SELLARS'S ATTEMPTS to produce on stage the most complex messages of the score have led him to circumvent traditional stagecraft in other ways besides anachronism. In *Don Giovanni*, for example, near the end of "Batti, batti, o bel Masetto" (the aria in which the peasant girl Zerlina tries to appease her bridegroom's jealousy of the Don), the soprano actually turns away from the audience during her showiest runs so that her descending roulades and the ascending cello obbligato can both be seen—in the smile rising on Masetto's lips, against his will, as he slowly succumbs to Zerlina's irresistible connubial promises.

Sellars has also developed an unorthodox but remarkably successful solution to that bête noire of Baroque opera directors, the da capo aria—an aria with a long opening section that, after a not-quite-so-long digression, is repeated "from the top," often with additional embellishments. Usually the singer merely stands in one spot until the ordeal is over. Sellars makes the aria dramatic by, for example, underlining the emotional contrast between two exhibitionistic outer sections and an inwardly directed middle one. But he has also shown that the repeated (da capo) section need not represent a return so much as an extension, a shaking limb that the character can venture even farther out

on. In the aria "Capricious man," from the oratorio *Saul*, Merab, Saul's snobbish older daughter, ridicules her father for his violent envy and fear of David (at whom he has just thrown his javelin). "Capricious man, in humour lost, By ev'ry wind of passion toss'd!" she sings over and over again in endless coloratura sixteenths. This intractable aria is often dismissed by Handel scholars ("Superfluous"—Winton Dean) and cut by music directors. In Sellars's staging of the da capo the cackling giggles of the first part become harder and harder to distinguish from hysterical sobs. Satire or obsession, anger or pain—the borderlines dissolve with only the slightest intensification of emotion. Sellars tells us that this is what the da capo aria is about.

But most radical of all is Sellars's solution to a fundamental problem in all musical staging—how to move to music. The usual theatrical illusions of reality make little sense when performed to music that is rhythmically inconsistent with "normal" movement. Sellars almost completely rejects naturalism for a vocabulary—an encyclopedia—of gestures culled from a breathtaking multiplicity of sources: classical painting and sculpture, silent movies and cartoons, vaudeville and burlesque, Broadway and Las Vegas, TV commercials and rock videos (he recently directed a video for Herbie Hancock), D'Oyly Carte and Oriental theater, deaf signing (he staged a Kabuki western for the National Theater of the Deaf) and martial arts, not to mention more traditional dance and mime.

The expressive freedom this has allowed him is as continually astonishing as the music itself. Take, for example, the painful yet hilarious entrance of Donna Elvira, Don Giovanni's abandoned mistress—a knockabout vaudeville shtick with a beat-up valise that the frazzled Elvira schleps back and forth with each two-bar phrase, sits on at every cadence, and slams to the ground at the most violently plunging and leaping intervals. Or the slow-motion choreography of love, rejection, and unwanted consolation that is worked out to the vocal intricacies of the great trio that ends the first act of *Orlando*, the partners (two sopranos and an alto) changing with each recombination of voices; the lovers and ex-lovers brushing past one another, reaching out to one another, pulling at one another, and falling, crawling, even rolling on the stage, as the high-arching roulades keep weaving and rewaving

LORD BYRON'S DILEMMA

(or, the lady or the Sambuca Romana)

Once a reputation reaches legendary proportions, fact and fiction tend to blur. In the case of George Gordon Noel Byron, a great deal is known but details are shadowy. He did move to Venice permanently in 1817. He was young and lame and handsome, and already notorious. The details of his infatuation with Sambuca Romana are harder to pin down.

It is said he first encountered this suave and elegant liqueur on an earlier visit to Rome, where it was, and still is, concocted from the berries of the wild elderbush. Smooth and mellow, with a fiery heart and an undercurrent of wildness, it soon became a passion. A passion equal to or surpassing an earlier love for coffee. If these things are so, we can be certain he indulged both pleasures while in Venice. The opportunities were there.

The story is told that it was in a Venetian cafe, early for a rendezvous, that he first ordered the two drinks at one time. His coffee arrived and, just as he saw his contessa stepping from her gondola, the liqueur. As he started to his feet, somehow jostling the waiter, the Sambuca Romana spilled, into the coffee. There was time for only one sip. He sipped, considered a moment, then sat down to finish the cup at his leisure.

It was plain the lady would have to wait. The attraction of this sensuous new taste was greater even than hers.

For the rest, we know Byron left Italy soon afterwards for Greece and his ultimate destiny. As for Sambuca Romana and coffee, the taste is history.

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October report on

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—*Kirkus Reviews*

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Handel's ecstatic web of sound. At one point Dorinda, the rejected shepherdess, stops, bends her knees, and holds her arm over her head in the position of Michelangelo's *Dying Slave*.

In these gestures Sellars insists that the very artifice and formality of the music hold a seriousness, an urgency, that goes far beyond, say, the uninhibited emotionalism of verismo opera. The stage gestures bring to the surface the emblematic power of the music. By the end of Elvira's aria we perceive her battered suitcase as an image both of Don Giovanni (what she'd like to do to him) and of herself (what he's done to her), and, more abstractly, of the heavy baggage of one's past that one neither can nor entirely wants to leave behind. The comedy and the pathos are both in the score. If the gorgeous music prevents the *Orlando* threesome from settling into a simple-minded romantic do-si-do, then why shouldn't the staging? Sellars has found a way to make us see what the music wants us to hear—that for the characters, however absurd or conventional their situation, everything is at stake.

The implications of even the slightest gesture, then, the smallest shift in expectation—as in the music—may be cataclysmic. Some of Sellars's most chilling moments are his visualizations of such musical details. In the terzettino of the first act of *Così*, the two sisters and the cynical Don Alfonso, who has secretly wagered with Ferrando and Guglielmo, their fiancés, against their fidelity, sing a sublime prayer for the men's safe voyage and return ("May the wind be smooth, the waves tranquil, and may every element respond benignly to our desire"). Sellars has the women kneeling and Alfonso standing behind them, their hands pressed together in prayer. Soon the hands begin to sway with the tranquil sixteenth-note waves undulating in the muted strings. Twenty-two bars in, halfway through the word "*desir*," Mozart brings in flutes and horns for the first time—a stabbing chord that suddenly clouds the harmony and threatens the expected resolution. On that disturbing chord, unacknowledged in most stagings, Sellars has Alfonso cover his eyes. His desire, radically different from what the others wish for, must be masked. What he knows his desire will cause—deceit, betrayal, disillusionment—may be too painful even for him to face.

But as in the work of one of Sellars's

role models, George Balanchine, these gestures are seminal, moving threads building toward an increasingly resonant network of cross-references. The rest of *Così* will see Alfonso's desire coming to pass and the gently swaying hands, an emblem of ideal love ("Un' aura amorosa"), replaced by a gesture of groping and self-imprisonment: a character kneeling, reaching out a hand (Ferrando's in "Ah, lo veggio," then Fiordiligi's in "Per pietà") blindly through the bars of a Baroque balustrade. The lovers, and Alfonso, too, are bewildered by their own desires; the opera ends without any resolution. Sellars liberates the dark harmonies and allows us to see them as part of the dazzling surface.

SELLARS'S CHOICE of musical repertoire isn't exactly modest—the most complex and ambitious works of the greatest composers, works whose familiarity or obscurity he takes as a kind of license to approach them on his own terms. It is ironic that his current position in Washington does not permit him to do what he does better than anyone else—direct opera. For that he'll have to go to Glyndebourne (1986), Houston (1987), and the Met (1988), and his present contract allows him only one outside engagement a year. One of the more pertinent facts of his work is that he, again like Balanchine, has gathered around him a "permanent floating" repertory company, which includes the extraordinarily versatile conductor Craig Smith, his most frequent partner and musical adviser; such brilliant—and game—young actor-singers as the soprano Susan Larson (Cleopatra, Fiordiligi, Yum-Yum, Dorinda, Michal, Elvira), the heroic countertenor Jeffrey Gall (Caesar, Orlando, David), and the baritones James Maddalena (Don Giovanni, Guglielmo, Zoroastro, and Achilles) and Sanford Sylvan (Alfonso, the alternate Orlando, and major characters in Peter Maxwell Davies's *The Lighthouse* and in the eye-opening double bill of Brecht and Weill's *Mahagonny Songspiel* and Bach's Cantata 60); and even a corps of designers and technicians. How willing—how competent—are the more established stars of the opera world to give Sellars what he requires? Can he resist the temptation to work only in their territory? It would be a sad irony if he were forced to sacrifice his uniquely flexible, sympathetic, and experienced band of conspirators on the glittering altar of its own success. □

COMPUTERS

SOFTWARE SUCCESSORS

BY JAMES FALLOWS

PERSONAL COMPUTERS have entered their rococo age. Much is rewrought and embellished; little is truly new. In the past few months several of the most popular computer programs have come out in revamped versions. Many of the revisions make the programs more attractive. A few raise basic questions about how computers can and cannot be useful. In this article I will be discussing changes in word-processing and database-management programs.

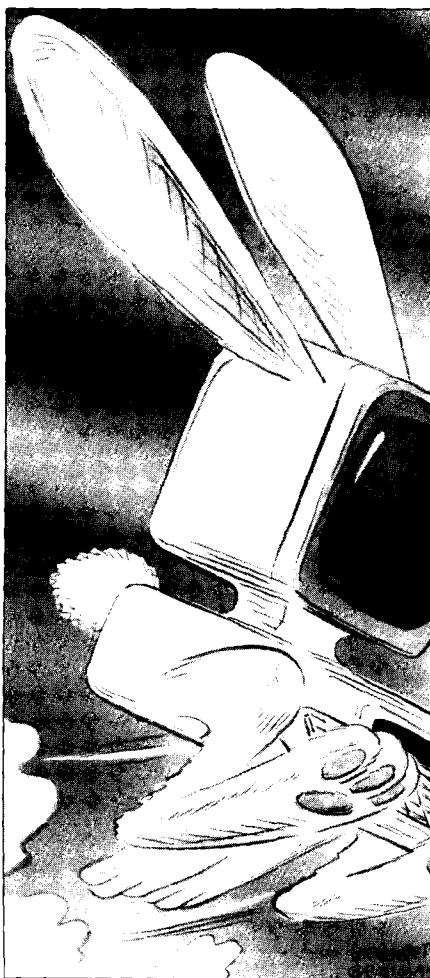
The most touching new product is WordStar 2000, successor to the famous word-processing program WordStar. For years the MicroPro Corporation, the creator of WordStar, found itself in a position analogous to that of the United States during the "Ugly American" era. It bestrode the world, but it felt itself inadequately loved. Everyone seemed to have a complaint about WordStar, even as it dominated the market and set the industry's standard.

In an attempt to stop all the whining, or out of a genuine desire to please, MicroPro has offered up WordStar 2000. Was the original WordStar considered intimidating and hard to learn? WordStar 2000 comes with an entertaining and informative tutorial program, complete with a Tinkerbell-like animated character who leads you from lesson to lesson. Were WordStar's commands arbitrary and obscure? The new commands are streamlined and mnemonic — to start editing, you type *E*, instead of the old WordStar's *D*. Were more and more users calling for split screens, which enable you to view and work on two documents at once? The new program has them. Did WordStar lack an "undo" command, with which you could retrieve material you had accidentally erased? WordStar 2000 has that, too.

Considered strictly on the basis of its specifications sheet, then, WordStar 2000 would seem to represent an enormous step forward from WordStar, perhaps even justifying its \$495 list price. (Like all the programs mentioned here, WordStar 2000 is usually available at half price from mail-order firms.) Its manuals

are excellent; it can handle footnotes and prepare indexes and do math; it is designed to make the most of the "sub-directories" and "pathnames" that add such convenience to new versions of the operating system called MS-DOS. But taken as a whole, the program is a catastrophe.

WordStar 2000's problem is that it op-



erates with such paralytic slowness as to convince the user that either he or his computer has died. When I first tried the program, on a friend's IBM Personal Computer, I thought there must be something wrong with his machine. Surely MicroPro would never try to sell a product so much more sluggish than its old stalwart. Later, after I had tried the

program on other computers and faced the horrifying truth, I got out my stopwatch to determine just how slow it was. When I was using the old WordStar and working on a document perhaps the length of this article, it took about three seconds for the document to be loaded from a disk drive and appear on the screen. With WordStar 2000, it took about thirty seconds. To "read" one document into the middle of another took four seconds with the original WordStar and almost forty seconds with the 2000. Searching for a certain phrase or character took about eight times as long with the new program. Moving a paragraph from the end of the document to the beginning took about six times as long. To be fair, WordStar 2000's automatic-reformatting feature is easier than WordStar when you change margins or spacing.

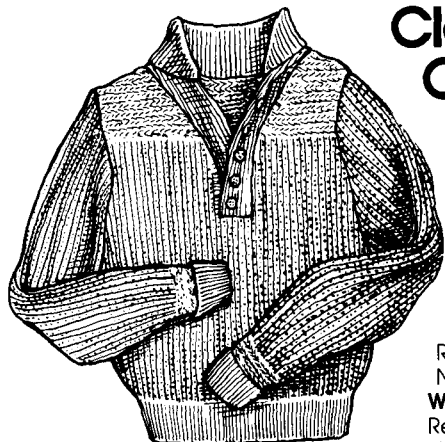
I know: complaints about a computer's speed always sound petty. Still, I cannot imagine that anyone who is accustomed to the original WordStar will find that footnotes or split screens justify the living-dead performance of WordStar 2000.

In its program's defense MicroPro has been claiming that the new program was never intended as a replacement for WordStar, which has been rechristened WordStar Professional and which will continue to be improved and sold. It is, instead, a complement, aimed at a different market. MicroPro representatives have also argued that *speed* can mean many different things. If you consider how long it would take someone who has never before used a computer to compose his very first letter or memo, WordStar 2000 probably is faster than WordStar. For an office full of people who use a computer once a month, a sluggish-but-simple system of this sort might make sense. But for everyone else, choosing an "easy to learn" program is like choosing a bike with welded-on training wheels. For a week you are happy; for the next ten years you grit your teeth.

TWO OTHER REVISED word-processing programs offer far more attractive combinations of features and speed. The one I began using about six months ago is version 4.0 of WordPerfect, which also has a list price of \$495. (The name is characteristic of an industry with no gift for understatement.) WordPerfect's approach is the opposite of WordStar's in several ways. While both the old and new versions of WordStar rely heavily on "control sequences"—hitting the con-



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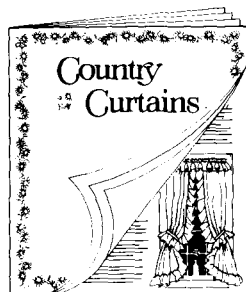
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trol key along with a letter—most of WordPerfect's commands are triggered by the "function keys," the bank of extra keys at the top or the side of the keyboard. WordPerfect is based on "menus"—you make choices from an array of options on the screen—while WordStar makes it easy to bypass the menus and also uses more non-menu commands. The WordPerfect screen display is not cluttered with the ruler lines and unasked-for information most programs force you to look at, and it gives a very precise idea of what the printed version will look like. Underlined words are underlined, boldface is bold. The printing controls are more flexible and powerful than those of any other word-processor I have seen. You can instruct the program to print several documents in sequence, and meanwhile you can be working on another. The footnoting commands, difficult to describe but very easy to use, are a tremendous benefit to anyone facing the burden of annotation. I switched to WordPerfect from the estimable WordStar when working on a project that required numerous footnotes.

The program's greatest asset may be the attitude of its parent company, Satellite Software International, of Orem, Utah. In the past two years SSI has repeatedly revised WordPerfect, each time rectifying problems that had been pointed out by users and in magazine reviews. When I first received the program, it had a defect that caused infrequent but annoying crashes, in which I would lose whatever material I had been working on. Even though this bug affected only users of the Victor 9000 computer, who hardly constitute the majority of the computing public, SSI put a technician to work, fixed the problem, and mailed out revised disks free.

WordPerfect has a small drawback and a larger one. The minor problem is its spelling checker, which works quite slowly and is unduly permissive. As far as it is concerned, *ar*, *fallot*, and *ostalgia* are all real words. The dictionary is advertised as containing more than 100,000 words, but since it is only about 240,000 characters long, it obviously cannot store all those words in their entirety. It relies instead on formulas for manipulating roots and suffixes, which lead usually to sensible results but sometimes to grief. The more important problem is one of speed. In most of its operations—loading, searching, saving—WordPerfect is about as fast as the original WordStar, which is to say, per-

fectly acceptable for most purposes. But because the program works so hard to make the screen display resemble the printed output, it hesitates and shivers as the cursor moves from one line to the next, sometimes giving the screen a sluggish, palsied look.

If I were sufficiently annoyed by the WordPerfect cursor, and if I had an IBM or an IBM-compatible machine, I would turn to XyWrite II-PLUS. (The program is pronounced *zy-write*. That its versions should, like Superbowls, be counted in Roman numerals is another sign of the industry's lack of restraint.) XyWrite is the fastest word-processor I have ever seen. Virtually everything that happens happens instantaneously. The same paragraph that took ten seconds to move with WordStar, and a minute with WordStar 2000, moved in less than a second with XyWrite. Most of the program's features are roughly the same as, or slightly less advanced than, WordPerfect's. Its footnoting commands are less flexible. It has no spelling checker (although its files are compatible with most independent spelling programs, including the estimable The Word Plus), and its printer controls are slower and clumsier than either WordPerfect's or the original WordStar's. However, it offers split screens, and it lets you escape to the operating system and run other programs without actually leaving XyWrite, an obscure-sounding feature that in practice is very handy. At a list price of \$295, it is substantially cheaper than the competition.

DATA-BASE-management programs have evolved in similar ways. Why should normal people care about data-base managers? Most of them shouldn't. The programs cost at least as much as good word-processors and are harder to learn. They are worth the expense and effort only if you must keep track of a sizable body of information and examine it in different ways. One week you may want to list your expenses chronologically, another week by tax category or check number or payee. You may want to arrange a bibliography by author or by title, or a mailing list by ZIP code or by last name. Data-base managers are designed for precisely such purposes, and they are judged on their flexibility and their speed.

The genealogy of data-base managers for personal computers runs back to a program called dBase II. (Didn't they teach punctuation and capitalization in the Silicon Valley schools?) Like the

original WordStar, it was powerful and it set a standard; even more than WordStar, it was regarded with fear, because of its reputation for being so difficult to comprehend. Apart from several serious technical limitations, dBase II had one supremely irritating flaw, which became ever more apparent as competitors emerged: it was terribly slow.

This weakness was ruthlessly exploited two years ago by the R:Base family of programs, which are the XyWrites of the data-base world. My technical friends tell me that in principle one competently written program should sort data about as fast as another. They say that sorting is the kind of irreducible operation that is limited mainly by the speed of the computer chip. Maybe so, but there was no denying how much faster R:Base 4000 was than the competition. The program's creator, Microrim, ran a series of ads listing comparative sorting times, showing "d Old Way" on one side and "R Way" on the other.

R:Base, then, would have seemed the obvious choice, except for an unfortunate limitation of its own. It was faster and easier to use than dBase, but it was less flexible, because dBase was really a programming language masquerading as a program. By the time you had learned all the "do while" and "accept to" commands, you could design a program that would print subtotals and sort columns whatever way you chose. The R:Base command language, if more clearly related to English, was not quite as complete.

Each program has subsequently evolved, in an attempt to eliminate its weakness. By now there is dBase III, which is more flexible, easier to understand, and much less sluggish than the original. The speed comparisons with the original dBase vary, depending on just what job the programs are doing, but by my reckoning the new dBase is two to three times as fast as the old—though still only about half as fast as R:Base. For anyone who is familiar with the old dBase commands and is willing to put up several hundred dollars for improved speed and power (the program lists for \$695), dBase III is a sensible choice.

Meanwhile, Microrim has put out numerous supplements to and revisions of R:Base, which have moved the program in two directions at once. Most of the changes have made the programming language more powerful and useful, shoring up R:Base's one vulnerable spot.



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Its latest incarnation, called R:Base 5000, can match dBase III practically feature for feature, while running significantly faster and offering several valuable extras. For example, R:Base provides for something that it calls "automatic rule checking"—if you were entering baseball players' batting averages, you could tell it to accept no number greater than 1.000 (more realistically, nothing over .400), which would help you catch typing errors in your original. The R:Base manuals are excellent, and the program itself offers on-line advice when you lose your way. In an appeal for converts Microrim also includes a system for automatically converting data prepared using dBase II, Lotus 1-2-3, and other programs for use with R:Base. (R:Base 5000 lists for \$700.)

At the same time, Microrim has tried to make R:Base 5000 "easier" to use, with results reminiscent of WordStar 2000. With a program called CLOUT, the company has attempted to bring "artificial intelligence" to the personal-computer user. Instead of asking for, say, a sales report in the usual way ("Select name, id, deptno, sales from salesfile sorted by deptno, sales for date ge 09-01-85 and date lt 10-01-85"), you could tell the computer, "Show me each department's leading salesmen for September." Depending on how much time you wanted to invest in whimsy, you could teach the computer to respond to "Who were the winners and losers last month?" or "Who's letting down the team?" or "Who gets a key to the executive washroom?"

This seems like fun, and the program—like WordStar 2000—is convenient the very first time you try it. But once you become familiar with R:Base or any other program, you realize that the "hard" way to ask for information is not really any harder—the "Select name" sequence above could be boiled down, through programming tricks, to something as terse as "Print S"—and it is far more efficient and precise. CLOUT drags R:Base's speed down to the dBase range, and it adds an element of chaos to data-base work. For reasons too complicated to explain here, you are always in suspense about how CLOUT will choose to display the information you are seeking. This kind of artificial intelligence resembles a pidgin language. To the newcomer it seems simple, but it forces you to work harder to make your meaning clear.

I WOULD LIKE TO end with a word in favor of another, less well known database program. I was initially drawn to KnowledgeMan out of plain curiosity. Micro Data Base Systems, which produces the program, ran peculiar-looking advertisements, which featured a charcoal sketch of a man holding a computer disk, done in the fashion of Social Realist murals from the 1930s. Micro Data gave elements in the program names like UserMan and KeyMan, and claimed that it could do practically anything better than the competition. I wondered how so campy an outfit, based in Indiana, could survive against the smoothies from Cambridge and LA.

The explanation, as I discovered after using the program for my own accounting, is that KnowledgeMan really is more powerful and flexible than any competitive program, R:Base and dBase included. Many of the differences between KnowledgeMan and the others are more significant on the spec sheet than in daily use. For example, KnowledgeMan lets me enter 255 "fields per record"—that is, 255 categories of information about each book I am citing or transaction I am recording—versus dBase III's mere 128, but I've never used more than twenty. Other features, however, are very useful. To me, the most valuable is the ability to draw information from several different "tables" simultaneously, without going through the time-consuming agony of "joining" or "merging" or "intersecting" them. KnowledgeMan also has its own spreadsheet, which is not as fast or pretty as the industry leader, Lotus 1-2-3, but which can automatically draw its entries from your data base and thereby calculate financial totals or your income tax.

KnowledgeMan runs about as fast as dBase III, although in some operations it approaches the R:Base realm. Its worst drawback is an impenetrable instruction manual that could double as an entrance exam for the Carnegie-Mellon Institute. Micro Data, which sells KnowledgeMan for \$500, says that prayers for a new manual are about to be answered. By the time you read this, KnowledgeMan/2 is supposed to be on the market, with a brand-new manual, an even more powerful command language, and other features that will make the program easier and more inviting to use.

I just hope the company doesn't get carried away with making the program "easier." It should reflect on what happened to WordStar, and beware. □

PHOTOGRAPHY

NATURE MADE PERFECT

BY HAL HINSON

ON THE DUST jacket of *Ansel Adams: An Autobiography* is a portrait of the author, taken up close, with his bristly white beard and pug nose, smiling just slightly under a big, light-colored Stetson. In this picture, which was taken by Jim Alinder, and in others inside the book Adams looks more like an old prospector than an artist. (If they made a movie of his life, the Walter Huston of *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* would be perfect.) The look that Adams gave the camera is an old mountain man's look—wry, crusty, a little embarrassed by the attention, but liking it just the same. It's disarming, with the slightly disengaged relaxation you often see in pictures of older people who are proud, and amused, that they've come so far.

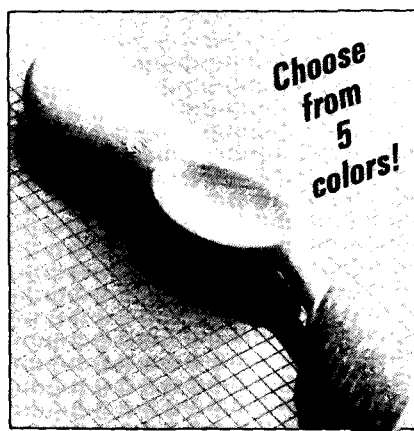
The tone of the book is disengaged too. With a minimum of fuss, Adams, who was born in 1902 and who died last year, tells about the things that were important in his life: his restlessness as a child, which forced him to abandon public schools (his formal education ended in the eighth grade) and receive his scholastic training at home, from his father; the accident during the San Francisco earthquake, in 1906, which bashed in his nose, leaving it permanently skewed; the elderly music instructor who introduced him to Bach and taught him his first pieces on the piano, the study of which became the driving passion of his life into his twenties; his friends, many of whom—Edward Weston, Paul Strand, Alfred Stieglitz, and Georgia O'Keeffe—were giants; the formation of Group f/64, in 1932, and his commitment to "straight" photography; the pleasure he took from being out in the open, searching for new images.

Adams tells the story of his life in a breezy, anecdotal style, and it unfurls with amazing ease, like a long, unbroken ribbon of good fortune and felicitous events. For some artists the course of their careers is determined by choice, for others by necessity or happy accident. In Adams's case the experiences in his life were so much of a piece as to seem, at least in retrospect, preor-

dained. His first trip to Yosemite, which was to play such an important role in his life—more important, it seems, than anyone or anything else—was in the summer of 1916. He was fourteen, and, he wrote at the end of the first day, "a new era began for me." The morning after he arrived, his parents gave him his first camera, a Kodak Box Brownie. Almost immediately he began to make a record on film of the things he encountered—El Capitan and the Cathedral Spires; the Merced River, Mirror Lake, and the Yosemite Valley. Few artists have their lives and their subjects handed to them, but, in a sense, everything Adams was to become was determined during those first days at Yosemite.

Adams would return to those locations repeatedly over the course of his life, photographing them obsessively, at different times of day and in different light, under varying weather conditions, and during different seasons. Initially he was content merely to describe the wonders he observed. Those early pictures, which Adams took only to provide a "visual diary" of his mountain trips, are the work of a competent hobbyist. Later Adams moved inside the scenes he photographed; his camera was engaged with its subject, and the pictures are more powerful. In them Adams attempted more than a simple rendering of, in Weston's phrase, "the thing itself"; he attempted a description of the external facts that would also allow him, somehow, to capture its essence.

ADAMS WAS NEVER interested in an art that was limited to the expression of his own personality. For him photography—or any other art, for that matter—was of value only to the extent that it transcended the personal to convey something of greater value, something lasting and universal. Adams's work is a continuation of the nineteenth-century tradition of landscape photographers who hiked around the English countryside carrying their big cameras and glass plates. Like the Victorians, Adams was interested in science, and he developed a



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complicated method of light exposure, based on the principles of applied sensitometry, which he called "the zone system." Adams took Alfred Stieglitz's frequently quoted proclamation that "art is the affirmation of life" and, with a heartfelt, almost primitive literal-mindedness, embraced it as his own. Adams first met Stieglitz at An American Place, Stieglitz's New York gallery, in 1933, at the height of the Depression, after traveling cross-country to show the great man his work. Stieglitz encouraged the young photographer (after initially alienating him with his characteristic sourness), and over the years the two men maintained a cordial, though distant, relationship. Adams believed that Stieglitz, more than anyone else, expressed what the art of photography should be. "Stieglitz's doctrine of the equivalent as the explanation of creative photography opened up the world for me," he once wrote. "In showing a photograph, he implied, 'Here is the equivalent of what I saw and felt.'"

Stieglitz taught Adams that photography was the investigation of the inner as well as the outer world. But for Adams nature, as well as art, was life-affirming. He had an Emersonian faith in the sanctity of nature, a belief that a love of nature expressed what was best in man.

If Adams had a religion, it was art, and nature was his church. Adams's pictures have a kind of pantheistic fervor (he described himself as having an "amorphous sense of deity"). In their exclusion of anything human they communicate the eerie sensation of existing outside of time; they could have been taken five minutes or five thousand years ago. The pictures that Adams took are about the cotton-ball texture of a mountainous cloud formation, or the way in which the sunrise transformed a lake into a brilliant looking-glass in that half moment in which the image was captured; about an instant in time in a seemingly timeless landscape. There is an Olympian majesty in his images of jutting mountain spires, stretching firs, and lunging waterfalls, and their power comes from the movement and vitality Adams created in them. This feeling that nature is alive and in transition redeems his pictures and makes them something more than calendar art.

Adams's meeting Stieglitz in 1933 was the second of two encounters with great photographers which opened his eyes to the possibilities of the medium. The first was with Paul Strand, at Los Gallos,

the ranch in Taos, New Mexico, owned by Mabel Dodge. The meeting occurred in 1930, at a time when Adams was torn between his interest in photography and his pursuit of a career as a concert pianist. Adams had begun studying the piano at thirteen, but as he grew older there was increasing doubt that he would be able to overcome his physical limitations—his hands, it seems, were too small—and achieve any real success as a performer. However, after Adams took his first look at a batch of negatives that Strand had taken that summer (and had not had time to print), his future was decided. "My understanding of photography was crystalized that afternoon," he wrote. "I returned to San Francisco resolved that the camera, not the piano, would shape my destiny." The decision was not embraced by all the members of his family. His wife, Virginia, lent her support. But, he reported, "my mother and aunt reacted differently, pleading 'Do not give up the piano! The camera cannot express the human soul!' I replied, 'Perhaps the camera cannot, but the photographer can.'"

Adams's musical training was his first exposure to the arts, and he worked at it with great seriousness. The practice he put in at the piano—the long, repetitious hours of concentration on nuances of technique, the discipline and hard work—laid the foundation for his future work. It was to assert itself in his sensitivity to tonal values and to the contrast of textures, in the stentorian crispness and precision of his attack, and in the meticulous application of craft to express in the print what was latent in the negative. Adams orchestrated the effects of light in his pictures in the same way a composer would, creating different moods and tonal colors. As he said on more than one occasion, "The negative is the score, the print the performance."

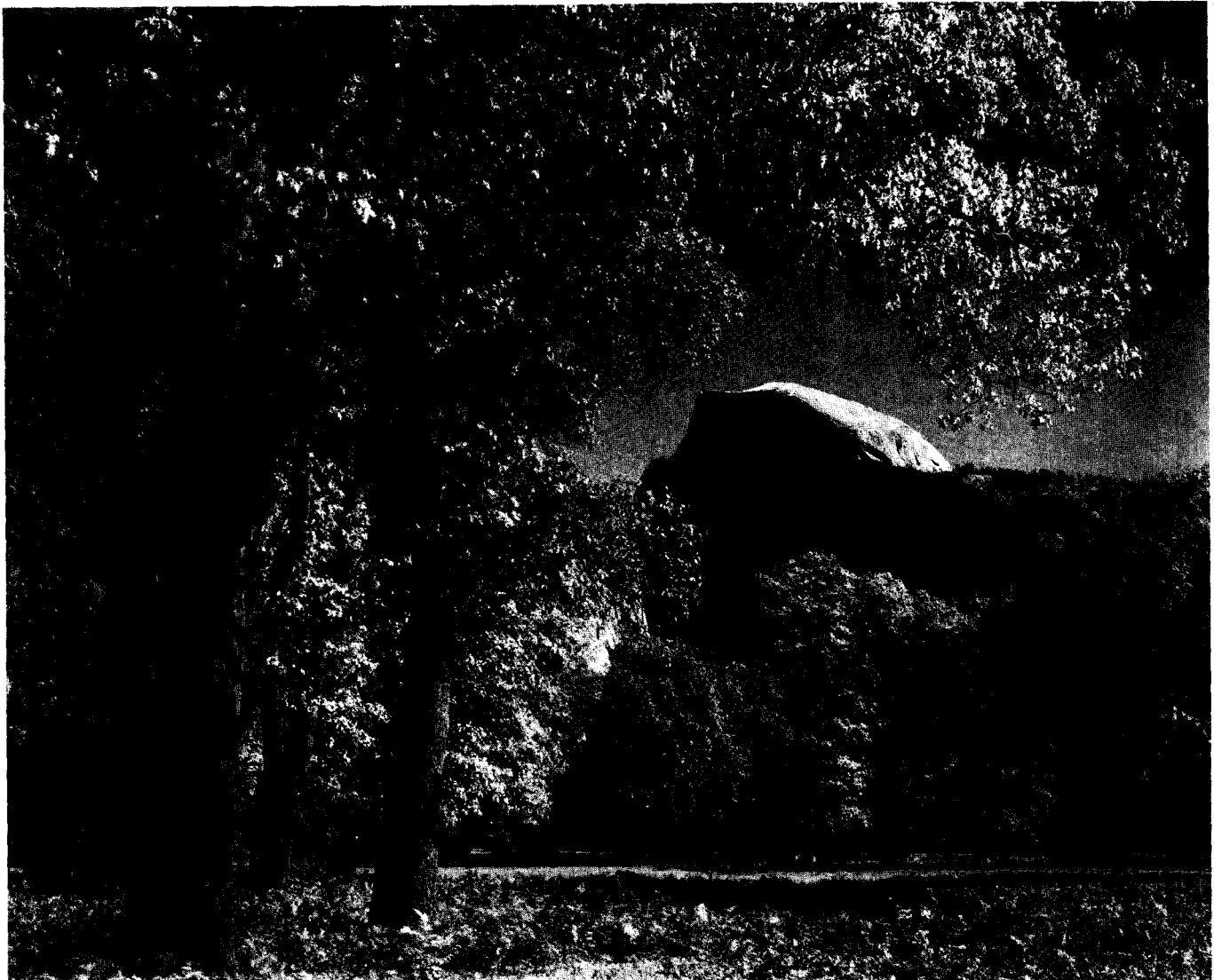
ARTISTS WRITE THEIR memoirs for a variety of reasons—because they feel compelled to, because not writing them would create the uneasy sensation of something left undone, or simply because they feel the need to look back over the past and try to make some sense of it. These books, at their best, allow us to see an artist's work more clearly by placing it between borders. They aren't usually works of art in themselves but they are of value, because they provide a kind of finishing touch to what has come before. The memoirs that are great works are those that give

us an impression of what it's like to be inside the artist's head, thinking along with him as he creates. Van Gogh's letters do that, and, in photography (sometimes), Weston's *Daybooks*.

Adams's reasons for writing appear to have been more practical. Working your way through his memoir, which at more than 400 pages, including 277 black-and-white photographs (seventy-nine of which have never before been exhibited or published), sits impressively and heavily in your hands, you begin to sense that Adams wrote the book primarily because someone persuaded him that the people who appreciated his work would want to read it—that it was expected of him. By the time he died, he had achieved a degree of fame previously unheard of for a photographer. His books, calendars, and posters have sold more copies than those of any other photographer in history, and in 1981 a mural-sized print of one of his best-known images, *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico*, was sold at auction for more than \$70,000, the highest price ever paid for a photograph. For many people Adams was more than just this country's most popular photographer. As an artist and activist, campaigning for environmental awareness and wilderness preservation, he became a legendary figure—in his own words, a kind of "folk hero."

These aren't the worst reasons for writing a memoir, but they do give the book a slightly obligatory air. Nothing seems to be at stake here; he is simply taking a leisurely stroll down memory lane. It's as if Adams had passed beyond grappling with old business. The only time he gives free rein to his emotions is when he slips into his role as a Sierra Club evangelist. But although Adams could wax rhetorical with the best of them, and did so at the drop of a hat, even the people who share his enthusiasms will probably skim those sections.

The real value of Adams's autobiography is that it brings us face to face with the dilemma at the center of his work. That Ansel Adams was a great photographer is incontestable; but he was also perhaps the most uninvolved great photographer in the history of the medium. The problem goes far beyond the fact that there are no people in his pictures. Adams claimed that there were always at least two people in his photographs: the photographer and the viewer. But it is hard to feel Adams's presence in his pictures. Instead, what we feel is the photographer's effort to reach beyond him-



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Half Dome, Autumn, Yosemite National Park, 1938 by Ansel Adams

self, beyond Ansel Adams and his private responses, to the part of himself that stood in for all of us.

Though he claimed that his pictures were equivalents of his experiences, you never feel that they connect with anything in his own life. It may be that Adams felt in the overwhelming presence of nature that his experiences, and man's, were small and insignificant. The natural settings described in Adams's pictures are indifferent to human concerns, and, looking at his work, you think that Adams, at least as an artist, was too. His landscapes are without a sense of human scale, as if he were trying to imagine an Edenic world completely outside of man's influence and uncorrupted by his touch. The pictures he took of the American outdoors are his fantasy of the natural world, a wish fulfilled by careful selection and the painstaking practice of his craft.

That so many others share Adams's

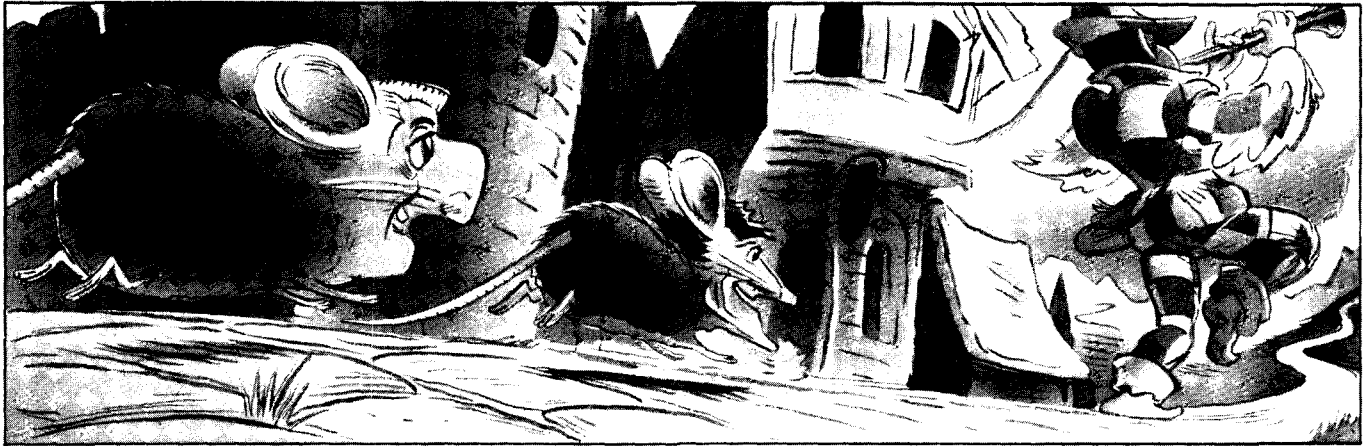
fantasy and respond to his conception of art as a means to convey the beautiful and sublime begins to explain his enormous popularity. But his rainbow-round-every-corner view of nature is too idealized to ring true. Adams preferred a tidy wilderness. In describing the natural scene in his photographs Adams was also revealing it, but his revelations are incomplete. The balance of his compositions and the harmony between elements implies an order that is more aesthetic than natural. Adams's virtuosity—which sprang from his desire to reach the highest levels of his talent, to bring all his skill and understanding to bear upon the realization of an image, and to achieve that which was as close to perfection as possible—is precisely what pushes us away from his pictures.

Adams, of course, was more than a landscape artist. He could be a fine portrait artist—for example, in his pictures of José Clemente Orozco and Charles

Sheeler and his oddly dissonant picture of Beaumont Newhall. But Adams was a poet more of light than of personalities. You sense that although capturing the faces he photographed interested him, it didn't challenge him fully or allow him to create the kind of sublimity in art that photographing nature allowed.

In the end his photographs are no longer about waterfalls or the Sierras. Though ostensibly they are landscapes depicting the glorious wonders of Yosemite or the California coast, nature has been left almost completely out of them. His mature pictures don't recall to us our own epiphanies in the wild or evoke the memory of clean air and the sun on our faces. Looking at them, we never think, "I know this place. I've been to this place." Nature, which had inspired his interest in photography, ceased, in effect, to be his true subject. In its place he put the pursuit of a pure, perfect, transcendental artistry. □

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by Peter Goldman and Tony Fuller.
Bantam Books, \$17.95.

THE NONFICTION BOOK that both tells a story and explains an important subject is a noble cause, but elusive. Most true stories just don't have much potential for rich analysis—gruesome murders, for example, which ever since Truman Capote clinically picked them as the ideal subject for the “non-fiction novel” have been the most durable subject of narrative nonfiction. A presidential campaign, though, ought to be a perfect subject for a book that is meant both to spin a yarn and to make a point. There's a clearly defined line of dramatic action, taking place in a variety of settings and building inevitably toward a climactic resolution; and in the background are the politics, economics, demographics, and psychology of the United States, about which something important is sure to be revealed in the course of the campaign.

Theodore H. White's *The Making of the President 1960*, though a little dated today by its benign view of authority figures, proved that this potential could be realized. A few later books that dealt with some smaller part of the whole enterprise—advertising (Joe McGinniss's *The Selling of the President 1968*) or the press (Timothy Crouse's *The Boys on the Bus*)—also were successful as both nar-

rative and analysis. But the potential of campaigns—and, for that matter, doings at the high levels of politics and government generally—conceals a danger: the compromises inherent in gathering the material. Every novelist has, as they say in journalism, total access. Political journalists have total access only to the public side of the campaign, which everybody knows about already; an account from the inside that uses scenes, dialogue, characterization, and plot requires making deals with the subjects, as absolutely as lungs require oxygen. These deals can be Faustian: the conditions that make it possible to tell the tale can make it nearly impossible to tell the truth.

This book by two *Newsweek* reporters (with help from several other members of the *Newsweek* staff) is, unfortunately, a perfect example of the way the bargains made with sources limit the perspective, the range, and even the language of journalism. In particular it's a testament to how difficult life has become for people trying to work the White lode these days. *The Making of the President*, by proving how interesting campaigns could be, helped bring about a tremendous increase in the size of the campaign press corps. There were 5,500 reporters at the Democratic Convention in Los Angeles in 1960, and there were 14,000 reporters in San Francisco in 1984. Material is harder to come by, because there's more competition for it, and also because politics has changed—party organizations have declined, television has risen—in ways that have made politicians much more guarded around the press.

The salvation of behind-the-scenes reporters like Peter Goldman and Tony Fuller has been the rise of paid political

consultants, who move from job to job all over the country, as crucial figures in campaigns. They produce television advertising, take polls, run phone banks and direct-mail operations and grassroots-organizing campaigns—establishing the link between politicians and voters, as the local party bosses used to do. They're also the world's best sources. They're on the inside, they follow the press closely enough to know the kind of material reporters are desperate for, and they're accessible. After a long day of unreturned phone calls and weaselly statements from press secretaries, it's sweet, sweet balm to call one of them, be put on the line instantly, told your stuff is great, and given the *real* story behind the official version of today's events.

Why are they so nice? In part, the pros share with reporters a love of politics, often to the exclusion of the rest of life, combined with a slight uninvolvedness in the fortunes of any particular candidate. Both groups know that whatever happens to this campaign, they'll be aboard the next one. And, psychological niceties aside, it's a business relationship: the pros need publicity to get another round of clients after this campaign is over. Somehow, in their accounts of the campaign their own roles—unrecognized author of victory, ignored Jeremiah before defeat—are seldom left out.

Goldman and Fuller seem to have gotten almost none of their material from President Reagan or Walter Mondale, though both were interviewed. Very little comes from the people in charge of the campaigns, James Baker and James Johnson, who knew they wouldn't be hiring themselves out again. The campaigns come to us here mainly through

the eyes of the denizens of the next level down, who leaked throughout 1984 on the promise that what they gave Goldman and Fuller wouldn't be published in *Newsweek* until after Election Day, just when they'd be looking for work again. It isn't surprising that the sources come out well—they're almost comically wise, prescient, and tough. And, coincidentally, the people who seem not to have confided in Goldman and Fuller lack these qualities.

ALAS, THE MOST important source in the book, the pollster Patrick Caddell, is also, of all the political pros in Washington, the one most legendary as a self-promoting news source, an unrelenting credit-grabber and self-dramatizer. Though he has been close at hand during some of the greatest disasters of modern-day Democratic politics (George McGovern's defeat in 1972, Jimmy Carter's in 1980, Carter's contemplation of the national "malaise" in the gas-line summer of 1979), he has been able to maintain a reputation as a genius (though "difficult"), in part by repeatedly laying out the behind-the-scenes story, with himself as hero, to grateful reporters. In Goldman and Fuller's hands, the legend only grows.

Caddell's modus operandi is first, in the earliest stirrings of a campaign, to retreat to his study and produce a very long memorandum on the mood of the electorate, which includes both polling data and a smattering of quotes from best-selling big-think books. The memo will say, in essence, that (a) the Democrats are in deep, deep trouble, far worse than anyone but Caddell has imagined, but (b) there is one way out, which is very risky and difficult and could easily be botched. A copy of the memo falls into the hands of a candidate, who is stunned by its brilliance and invites Caddell aboard. At first Caddell is allowed to carry out his blueprint, and the candidate shoots up in the (that is, Caddell's) polls; then the resentful and small-minded nuts-and-bolts campaign staff begins to shut him out, Caddell quits, and the candidate plummets (again, in Caddell's polls). The sad story comes out in the papers, and Caddell clambers aboard a new campaign.

Here's how the script played out in the last presidential campaign, according to Goldman and Fuller: In 1983 Caddell writes a memo about the importance of new ideas and a new generation of leadership. Its arguments are but-

tressed by the results of a poll he took in Iowa where a "Candidate C" running on those themes came out of nowhere to beat "Candidate A" and "Candidate B," based on Mondale and John Glenn. Then he tries at length to persuade his friend Senator Joseph Biden, of Delaware, to run for President as Candidate C. (Another campaign book, *Wake Us When It's Over*, by Jack Germond and Jules Witcover, says that Caddell wooed Senator Dale Bumpers, of Arkansas, before Biden, but Goldman and Fuller don't mention this.) When Biden opts out, he presents the Candidate C memo to Gary Hart, whose campaign is in the doldrums, and signs on as a key adviser. It's not long before "suddenly, people began listening to [Hart]."

On the eve of Hart's great upset of Mondale in New Hampshire, Hart's old staff won't take the advice in Caddell's memos. "*That's it for me*," he thinks bitterly. "*I'm leaving the campaign. I'm finished*." Somehow he summons the inner strength to stay on, and by Georgia he is cannily advising Hart to go directly on the attack against Mondale. But the small-minded staff torpedoes Caddell's strategy. He writes another memo, threatens to quit ("and if his own departure would help put it right, he was more than willing to go"), and watches helplessly as Hart loses. On to Illinois: Caddell persuades Hart to put ads on television attacking Mondale's ally Edward Vrdolyak, the alderman, and "the impact, in Caddell's polling, was electric; Hart jumped to an 11-point lead in twenty-four hours." (Mondale's pollster says the eleven-point lead showed up in his polls before the anti-Vrdolyak ads ran.) Hart, who just won't listen, orders the ads taken off the air, and in the ensuing confusion instantly drops twenty points.

New York? "His major contribution in New York had been some tough negative spots tying Mondale to Carter. They had helped Hart close the gap from 18 points to 1 in Caddell's polling on the weekend before the primary, whereupon somebody pulled them off the air without asking Caddell." In Pennsylvania, Hart is again "unresponsive to direction," and "by the end, Caddell had given up and gone home to wait for the phone to ring," so of course it's not his fault that Hart loses. He does, however, come back in time to engineer Hart's victory in Ohio ("Caddell & Company put together a strategy . . . and Hart executed it with rare skill. . . . His campaign was back in sync for the first

time in weeks. His speeches had bite again. . . .")

Then, incredibly, Caddell begins working for Mondale, having wooed him with a gloomy memo while still working for Hart. (Back in 1979 Elizabeth Drew, of *The New Yorker*, reported that Mondale found the Caddell memo that triggered Carter's retreat to Camp David "silly and sophomoric"; early in 1984 the talk in Washington was that Caddell was still fuming at Mondale for this insult.) Several Caddell memos, Caddell-engineered Mondale surges, and a contemplated Caddell resignation later, the election is over.

In the midst of all of Caddell's pouting and self-dramatizing, there does seem to be a good long-range feeling for politics, but Goldman and Fuller's method dictates that they take all of him, not just the good parts. They present his inside machinations as the real meat of the 1984 campaign and give his tantrums the same weight as his insights. It's hard to imagine anything he could say that Goldman and Fuller wouldn't take at face value. At one point, without irony, they report that Caddell was angry because there were many people at a meeting, "any one of whom might leak the story to the press"; later, during the Mondale campaign, they say, "Caddell was going to be gone after election day, win or lose." Fat chance.

It isn't as if only Caddell gets this treatment either. Every source is accorded admiration and a suspension of the journalist's normal skepticism. John Reilly, a Mondale aide, is "a man of keen wit and earthy humor." Robert Shrum, an aide to Edward Kennedy, is "a brilliant advocate" whose claim to his boss that he can win 408 electoral votes in 1984 Goldman and Fuller report with a straight face. Goldman and Fuller's sources don't make mistakes, they discover them, as in "the warning signals troubled Mike Ford," or "as Spence, the Texas adman who did Mondale's media, saw with sharpening concern." If there is a conflict between the views of different sources—Mondale's aides think he's burdened with Geraldine Ferraro, Ferraro's aides think she's burdened with Mondale—then the book just cheerfully reports each version in the same omniscient voice.

Goldman and Fuller's great reportorial coup is exactly in the vein of savvy memos from a second-level political pro, only the pro is Richard Nixon. (Germond and Witcover have the outlines of

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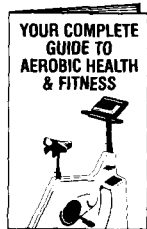
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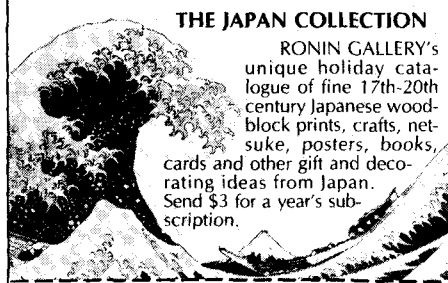
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Nixon's role in their book, which seems to prove that Nixon, like the other pros, talked intentionally and self-interestedly, in order to burnish his reputation as a political sage so that he'd be brought into the next campaign.) Again, too much is made of Nixon's sagacity. Is it really remarkable that after all these years he knows how many electoral votes Ohio has? But a few glimpses of him are irresistible—summoning a couple of Reagan aides to his aerie in New Jersey to offer his advice over five bottles of wine, one from each year he ran for national office, and urging the Reagan campaign to "carpet-bomb" a northern industrial state.

Others among the great don't come off very well either, which must in part be a reflection of the pros' tendency to view their clients as dummies. Reagan "sometimes longed to try" to invade Cuba; he does his evening paperwork in front of the television, takes Wednesday afternoons off, and, flying home depressed after the first debate, asks for the funny pages for solace. Mario Cuomo was the Democratic keynote speaker at the convention in part because he asked to be, as a condition of endorsing Mondale in the New York primary; also, though he lobbied hard for Ferraro for Vice President in public, he lobbied hard against her in private. Mondale is a cipher, his passionate liberalism obscured by his extreme reserve, his tactical caution, and his semi-fancy taste in clothing, cigars, and restaurants.

IT ISN'T JUST the appropriation of the pros' view of the campaign that plagues this book—it's the appropriation of their whole way of looking at the world. To start with a small but annoying example, the language of national politics, with its tropism toward mixed metaphors and trendy jargon, is Goldman and Fuller's language too. Their prose is vivid and it moves along, but it's full of all kinds of detritus: hokey dramatics ("John Reilly stood gazing out at a stunning autumnal sunset," "Geraldine Ferraro gazed absently out the window of the chartered Learjet," "Mondale would sit alone in his cabin, gazing absently out the window and into himself"), Anglicisms ("the 1982 by-elections," "a little offish," "a bit previous in his ambition"), technicians' lingo ("the three-man excomm," "she floated onto the scope," "it would go into meltdown when the June polls came in"), even song and movie titles ("Glenn was run-

ning on empty," "Jesse Louis Jackson had been the poltergeist of American politics," "Nixon's triumph of the will in 1968, after eight years in the wilderness"). One need not fear that references to E.T., Cabbage Patch dolls, Trivial Pursuit, *Megatrends*, and the G spot might be missing either.

A little further up on the scale of importance, politics' lack of intellectual depth is on display here too, made more obvious by the allusion-mania that's sweeping Washington now. Mike Ford, of the Mondale campaign, is quoted as writing "[Reagan] is Winesburg, Ohio. We are Cleveland. . . . Winesburg, of course, never existed." But it requires barely getting past the cover to discover that Anderson deemed *Winesburg* "The Book of the Grotesque"; the book represents almost exactly the opposite of Reagan's view of small-town life. Caddell comes across as an extensively read scholar of military history, but the quotes he flings around issue directly, I believe, from the military-reform leader John Boyd's standard briefing, not the library. If Goldman and Fuller are less than completely wowed by such references, they don't let on.

Worst of all, the pros are, and therefore this book is, uninterested in, and in fact quite cynical about, the substance of politics. Richard Darman, now the deputy secretary of the Treasury and then one of the "White House pragmatists" infamous in the conservative movement, turns out to have been the author of Reagan's line about the Democrats being "so far left they've left America." "He didn't believe it, but it was something Reagan could plausibly say, and it seemed to Darman important to get it said early—to put this guy Mondale in a coffin as soon as possible," Goldman and Fuller say. Mondale's aide Bob Beckel, in a discussion of the deficit, suggests that the campaign should promise to close it simply by collecting delinquent taxes. Told this is impossible, he says, "Who gives a shit? . . . Why don't we just say, 'There's eighty billion dollars in uncollected taxes and we're going to get seventy billion of it back?'"

Probably Goldman and Fuller know how damning these stories are, though they don't say so; they just won't allow themselves to step back from their sources' world. It's too bad, because what's really interesting about this campaign is exactly what the pros don't care about at all—the forest, not the trees. As Goldman and Fuller themselves say in

their foreword (though without delivering the payoff of explanation later), "Deep currents were at play at and beneath the surface of events, currents that were profoundly transfiguring our politics and therefore our lives. Reagan's triumph . . . signaled the decline and probably the fall of the old order in America—a liberal Democratic order that had governed political life and thought for much of the past half century. . . ."

For many years there was a strong argument political reporters could make to justify their surrender to the tides pulling them into the day-to-day details of campaign strategy: these were in fact what mattered most. The presidential elections of the fifties, sixties, and seventies were seen as essentially non-ideological. When two centrists ran, it was close; when a true believer like Barry Goldwater or George McGovern got into the race, it was a runaway. So the pro-vantage point was the best one from which to view an election: how well they did their jobs really would determine the outcome. This time, though, it's very hard to imagine that Mondale might have won even if he *had* listened to Caddell more. The details seem almost irrelevant, and one hungers for explanations of what national nerve Reagan tapped and Mondale failed to tap (what's striking in going through the campaign again is how little genuine enthusiasm he engendered all year long). Perhaps political journalists will learn a lesson from 1984 and will broaden the scope of their concerns next time.

This book offers another implicit argument for writing about tactics, which is that to do otherwise would make it impossible to use the narrative form. Indeed, there are a few moments in *The Quest for the Presidency* where the storytelling really sings though the material is without lasting consequence: Mondale's delegate-counters whooping as their man goes over the top, Hart meeting with his aides in the bleak early days back in Iowa. What these scenes have in common, though, is that apparently somebody from *Newsweek* was in the room. One way to write a successful campaign narrative, from the inside, would be somehow to get the material firsthand, rather than relying on the accounts of extremely self-interested sources. Perhaps some future genius of access will figure out a way to do that, but it seems improbable, given that the most tightly controlled campaigns, like Reagan's, have done so well. Another

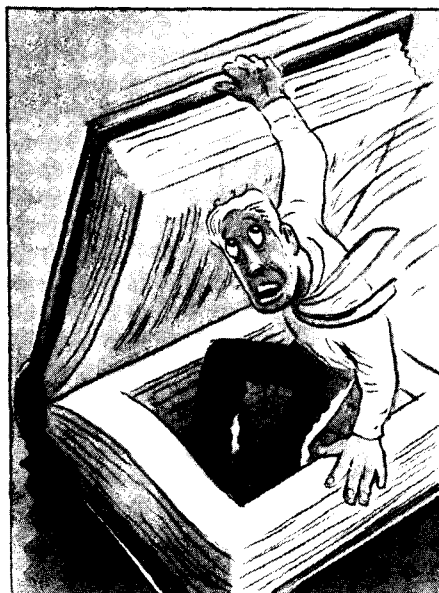
way to write a successful campaign narrative would be to go outside instead: to lend more depth and drama to the public side of the elections by giving it a context. (We forget now that White devoted a whole chapter, and a good one, to the 1960 census data.) *The Quest for the Presidency* would have been a much better book if it had overcome the assumption that the inside stuff is where drama—and truth—reposes. □

BLUE OVER THE BOMB

BY JOHN ROMANO

THE NUCLEAR AGE
by Tim O'Brien. Knopf, \$16.95.

WHAT TIM O'BRIEN'S fourth novel, *The Nuclear Age*, is about, and where it succeeds and where it fails, are easily told. It is about William, a man of our time, for whom the neurotic political climate of the sixties and seventies and eighties—in particular the awareness of the possibility of nuclear annihilation—has resulted in an almost total personal neurosis by the time of the novel, which is 1995. It is told from his point of view, which is both pensive and disoriented, and which is meant both to make us think and to disorient us. Its central image is the man of 1995 digging a fallout shelter, which he has thought about sporadically since his grade-school days, when air-raid drills and nuclear phobia quickened him with a lasting fear. The



book succeeds in places, mostly in anecdotes encountered in the first fifty pages. It fails as a whole. It is in truth less a book about living with the abominable than an abominable book, abominably written and underconceived in every important respect. But it is also provocative, though hardly in a way its author can have intended. It provokes the question, Why do liberal causes and humane fears so consistently make for impersonal novels?

Before tackling the question, two declarations of intent ought to be made. The first is that I think Tim O'Brien is a very good writer; he is the author of *Going After Cacciato*, which strikes me as the best novel about Vietnam and one of the best war novels that I know. The second is that I wouldn't have undertaken to comment on his current novel if I didn't think that his fears were the beginning of wisdom. I agree, moreover, with his premises: that, when we must live under such ominous skies, sanity itself is a pasteboard mask; that it is time we lent our imaginations to the task of personalizing the threat, the affront, the terror, of the nuclear age. But a bad book won't help us.

The Nuclear Age is founded on a mistake. The mistake is not political in nature, though it occasions the protagonist's long involvement in the underground left, the book's most errant (and lengthy) nonsense. It is aesthetic. There is nothing between the book's two layers, nothing between the outraged rhetoric of fear and protest and the rambling, recollected chapters of a life. It is as if the author feared that to locate a novel between these two layers—that is, in a richly imagined private life, affected by public realities but equally a reality in itself—would be to undermine the supposed universality of the upper rhetorical layer (it's a fear that haunts or should haunt us all) and also of the nether layer of fictive memoir (didn't you, too, crouch in hallways in second grade, to save yourself from the bomb sure to drop this very night?). And it is this universality, this shared communitarian reality, that the author evidently assumed is the proper arena for political fiction. It's a common liberal dread, this dread of making too personal an issue out of what ought to be the dominant concern of the race.

O'Brien's book would not be distressing if the need he no doubt sensed in sitting down to write did not remain unmet. We need a richly conceived *person-*

alization of the threat of nuclear destruction. There are passages in Jonathan Schell's two books on the subject that give us an idea of how valuable such a personalization might be. Everyone knows that we're immersed in this nuclear-deterrence business only because we've honed our capacity to deny the reality of the threat; and we're successful in denying it only because our imagination of the disaster we're toying with is so meager. It follows that fleshing out the imagination might defeat the forces of denial, and when denial—an important factor in the conduct of nuclear diplomacy—is defeated, we might talk sanely among ourselves and among nations on the subject of what we're up to. It's not that we need novels of post-nuclear horror. We need novels that show us the pre-nuclear horror of living under false pretenses by denying the disaster we may be brewing. I will add, though, that five minutes of Jane Alexander as the wife and mother in the post-holocaust film *Testament* is worth all of O'Brien.

In saying that Schell succeeds, or *Testament* does, where O'Brien fails, I haven't said much about what a novel might do that *The Nuclear Age* doesn't. Schell was writing an unabashed polemic, a call to action, and *Testament* exploits its genre's power to make actual and (literally) sensational what the future may feel like when—if—it gets here. But novels have more of an ideational claim upon them than movies do, and their direct service to political rhetoric is always troubled and frequently askew. A notable success in presenting liberal discourse palatably in a novel can be found in *Anna Karenina*. Levin's older brother, Sergei, is a St. Petersburg journalist of liberal sentiments—sentiments Tolstoy endorsed. The character presents arguments some of which, at least, are Tolstoy's own. But he is pompous, arrogant, unpleasant. We are allowed to feel his personal vacuity as well as his self-importance, qualities that seem often to attach to cause-ridden people. We're allowed to be *bothered* by the rhetorical character of rhetoric, and of rhetorical people. The ideas themselves, however, get a fair outing. Tolstoy has successfully smuggled them in.

No ideas as such violate either the rhetoric or the melodrama of O'Brien's novel. Indeed, there is a piety toward William's fears that virtually prohibits us—as it seems to have prohibited the author—from *thinking* much about the absurd world (our own) that he presents.

The novel can only say that if you think William's crazy, *you're* crazy. This is not untrue. When William's father mocks him for trying to build a fallout shelter under the Ping-Pong table—"A Ping-Pong table versus the bomb?"—our heart is with William, and such a scene makes us resolve always to keep in view the terrified children we have created with our nuclear games. But as one reads *The Nuclear Age*, William, whose adventures and anxieties fill every page, never succeeds in coming to life. We know he's afraid, and we know we're being told his fear is justified; what we don't know is who William is. □

BRIEF REVIEWS



ROBERT FULTON by Cynthia Owen Philip. *Franklin Watts*, \$18.95. Although generations of American schoolchildren were told that "Robert Fulton invented the steamboat," he did not do so in Patent Office terms. His own terms were more flexible. "But in mechanics, I conceive, we should rather consider them improvements than inventions . . . as the component parts of all new machines may be said to be old; but it is nice discriminating judgment, which discovers that a particular arrangement will produce a new and desired effect. . . . Therefore, the mechanic should sit down among levers, screws, wedges, wheels etc. like a poet among the letters of the alphabet, considering them as the exhibition of his thoughts; in which a new arrangement transmits a new idea to the world." The steamboat was not a new idea. Attempts to power a ship by steam had been made by a number of people (in John Fitch's case, with something close to efficiency) but never with enduring success. Fulton, who came to steamboats with extensive financial backing and after years of work in Europe on canal transport and submarines, had the "discriminating judgment" to achieve the necessary balance of hull design, engine power, and paddle size. His boat worked safely—all his designs did that—and reliably, which was more than can be said for his submarines. Fulton and the submarine make a saga on their own—one involving high diploma-

cy, low principles, moral outrage, and ultimate disappointment, for the boats would do everything a submarine ought to do except hit an enemy target. Ms. Philip's biography never quite brings Fulton the man to life, because the records offer more hint than fact, but Fulton the inventor—wheedling patrons, blarneying Napoleon, blackmailing British naval authorities, suing American competitors—is very lively indeed, a mixture of mechanical genius, social idealist, and greedy entrepreneur. He died in 1815, at the age of forty-nine, and one can only wonder what naval warfare would have become if he had lived longer. He had already instigated a steam frigate.

THE ACCIDENTAL TOURIST by Anne Tyler. *Knopf*, \$16.95. The hero of Ms. Tyler's wryly amusing novel is the unheroic Macon Leary, a fussy, cautious, over-methodical fellow whose profession requires travel but who wants nothing more than to huddle down with his equally dormouse siblings. The Learys—one sister, three brothers—are quietly and harmlessly nuts, or would be if they avoided matrimony. Macon's wife has followed the example of two sisters-in-law and fled. Macon is back in the old homestead, along with his corgi, who is also nuts but not harmlessly: Edward bites. Macon's attempt to correct the animal leads him to Muriel, a dog trainer who is his opposite in almost every respect. The yin-yang comedy that ensues is delightfully clever and, in its own zany way, believable.

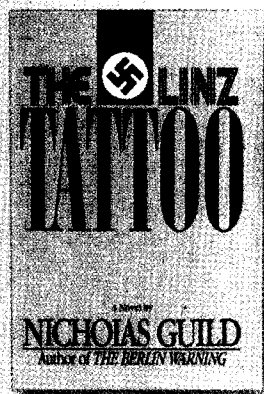
HONKYTONK GELATO by Stephen Brook. *Atheneum*, \$12.95. An Englishman loose in Texas is a promising start for a travel book, and promise is where this one begins and ends. Mr. Brook was evidently overimpressed by the size and variety of Texas and became so determined to cover all of it that he never stayed long enough in one spot to see more than the façade. Façades, however well described, are flat.

RANSOM by Jay McInerney. *Vintage Contemporaries—Random*, \$15.95 cloth, \$5.95 paper. Readers of *Bright Lights*, *Big City*, the author's malicious comedy about magazine publishing, will be surprised by his new novel, which resembles the previous book only in the origin and age of the characters (American, mid-twenties) and the economical speed of the action. The tale is set in contemporary Japan, with much martial-arts background, and the theme is self-imposed penance for a misdeed that might reasonably be considered

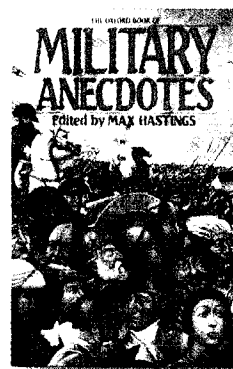
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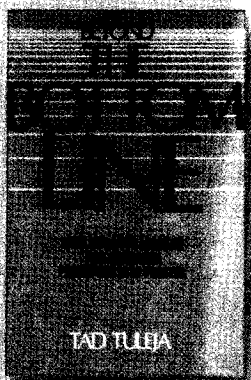
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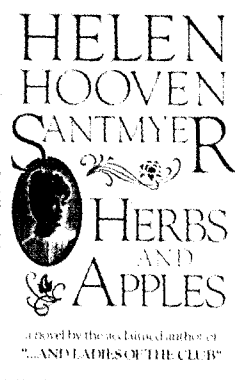
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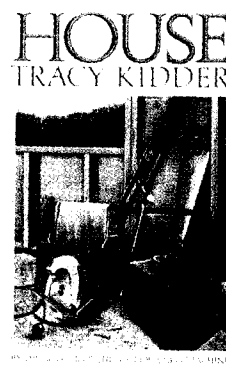
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"SPOONERISMS"

Across. 1. BIRD WATCHERS (anag.) 9. CIA-O 10. FRAUDY'S 12. MON-DAY 13. ANITA (hidden) 14. BI(GO)TS 15. FOSTER (anag.) 16. A-RSENAL (a + anag.) 20. T(A-PRO)OM 21. P(E)A SO-UP 25. A-L-LEG-R-O 26. A-STROS (sorts rev.) 28. HARLOW (anag.) 29. TOO-TS 30. CU(T O)FF 31. WRITES (anag.) 32. S-HOP 33. BUSTER KEATON (anag.) Down. 1. WOMB-AT 2. STING(RA)Y 3. DA-DOES 4. NO-TEBO-OK (to be anag.) 5. FL-YTRAP (party rev.) 6. SUN HAT (anag.) 7. EDIT (rev.) 8. SCAR-A-B 11. STEAMY (anag.) 17. A-P(PL)AUSE 18. LONG SUIT (anag.) 19. SEA COW (anag.) 20. RO(A)STER 21. STATIC (anag.) 22. TAR P-IT 23. BERTHA (anag.) 24. FO-EMAN (rev.) 25. TORS (hidden)

W	O	R	D	B	O	T	C	H	E	R	S
O	C	I	A	O	F	R	A	U	D	S	C
M	O	N	D	A	Y	Y	A	N	I	T	A
B	I	G	O	T	S	F	O	S	T	E	R
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T	O	O	T	S	T	C	U	T	O	F	F
I	W	R	I	T	E	S	S	H	O	P	A
C	U	S	T	E	R	B	E	A	T	E	N

ACROSTIC NO. 2

"Hell must be isothermal, for otherwise the resident engineers and physical chemists (of which there must be some) could set up a heat engine to run a refrigerator to cool off a portion of their surroundings to any desired temperature."

—Henry Albert Bent, (*The Second Law*)

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semi-inadvertent. Mr. McInerney is a young writer with more than one good weapon in his arsenal.

A MAGGOT by John Fowles. Little, Brown, \$19.95. Mr. Fowles's story begins intriguingly with a group of eighteenth-century travelers, all of whom are other than what they appear to be. Then it wanders off into religious fanaticism and black magic that no amount of expert prose can make anything but what it is—foggy nonsense.

THE INTELLIGENCE MEN by Raymond E. Fancher. Norton, \$17.95. Although there has never been a consensus among psychologists on what intelligence truly is, these scientists have been trying to determine its origin and measure its levels for well over a century. Naturally, given the "little man who wasn't there" foundation of the enterprise, they have been in disagreement from the start. As Professor Fancher points out, two disputes are involved. The first concerns the relative importance of heredity and environment in creating intelligence, while the second concerns the validity of the various tests devised to measure intellectual ability. The author's account of the people who have sought to explore the origins or judge the degree of intelligence covers their backgrounds as well as their methods, and reveals that in most cases the scientist's personal experience dictated his adherence to one or the other side in the sometimes acrimonious debate. Such allegiance is hardly surprising, for a researcher who starts from nowhere and gallops off in all directions cannot expect to reach a useful destination, but it has led to misinterpretations, misuses, absurdities, and at least one case of fraud. Professor Fancher is evenhanded in giving deserved credit and moderate in reproaching folly. His suggestion that the parties should forget their differences and work as allies is undoubtedly a good one.

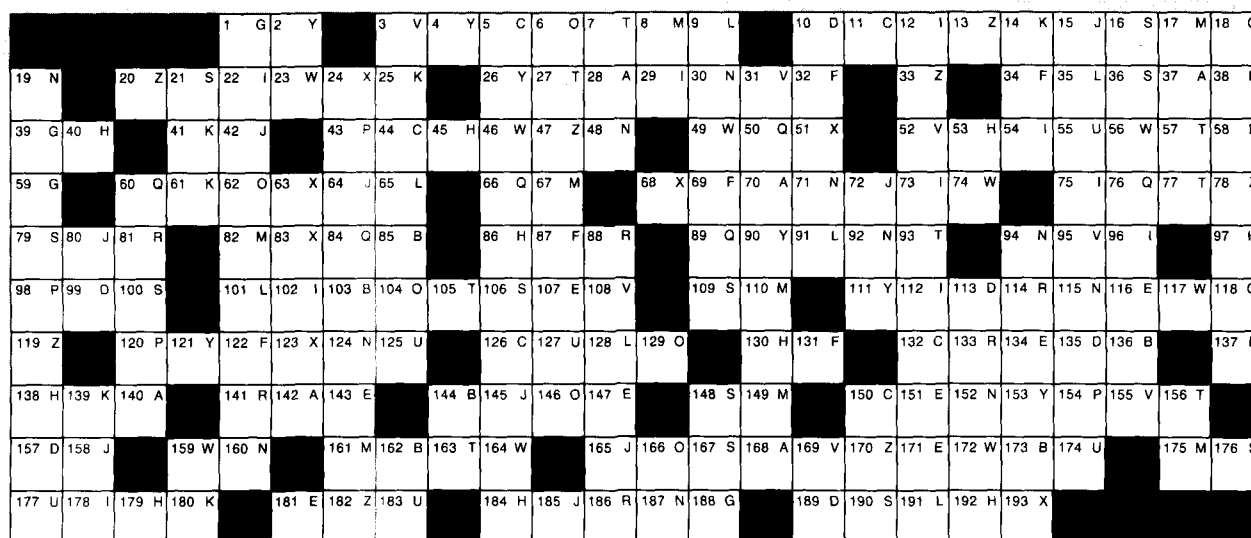
RENOIR by John House, Anne Distel, and Lawrence Gowing. Abrams, \$29.95. This handsome book represents the Renoir exhibition, the most comprehensive in over ten years, that is currently on the road, and the reproductions of the paintings are of far more importance than the modest, sensible text. Renoir himself believed that a picture "should be something likeable, joyous and pretty—yes, pretty. There are enough ugly things in life for us not to add to them." On the evidence here, he never did.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

ACROSTIC No. 3

BY DOROTHY OSBORNE

The letters of clue answers, when put in the appropriately numbered squares, will spell out a quotation. The first letters of clue answers spell the author and source of the quotation.



The solution to Acrostic No. 2 appears on page 108.

- A. Colorado River tribe 168 37 142 28 70 140
- B. Giordano Bruno's material units 85 162 173 144 156 103
- C. Hash-house "communist" 132 44 126 150 31 5
- D. Dandled pet 135 113 10 157 69 189
- E. Embezzler of Miss Trotwood's fortune (2 wds.) 134 171 116 147 181 137 143 107 151
- F. Total amount of money bet on a race 87 69 32 34 112 131
- G. Low shoe with a strap 118 188 18 59 39 1
- H. Soft cheese 179 40 192 97 184 130 138 86 53 45
- I. Bourkina Fasso's former name (2 wds.) 178 29 12 96 54 73 102 112 22 75
- J. Polynesian woodwind (2 wds.) 64 72 165 80 42 185 145 15 158
- K. Livestock herds 180 61 41 139 14 25
- L. What Paricutin did in 1952 35 91 128 101 191 9 65
- M. Canaille 161 17 82 110 8 175 149 67

- N. Triple Crown horse of 1977 (2 wds.) 115 152 160 48 94 30 124 92 71 19 187
- O. Slip-on jersey (hyph.) 104 129 166 62 146 6
- P. "Who's on first?" interlocutor 58 120 43 98 38 154
- Q. Lose consciousness (2 wds.) 50 66 76 84 89 60
- R. Discoverer of the Mississippi (2 wds.) 81 88 114 186 141 133
- S. Verdi opera (2 wds.) 167 16 79 106 109 36 21 100 148 176 190
- T. "Lunarium" or "daftysylum" 57 7 93 27 77 105 163 156
- U. "We are all _____, Mr. Manders" (Ibsen) 174 127 177 183 125 55
- V. Oscar-winning role for Robert Donat (2 wds.) 169 155 3 95 31 52 108
- W. Pathological urge to repeat what's said 164 117 23 56 46 49 159 172 74
- X. Austrian physicist who studied sound 51 24 193 68 123 63 83
- Y. Best-selling autobiography of 1984-85 90 121 26 2 111 153 4
- Z. Exemplar of Americanism (2 wds.) 33 78 20 119 170 13 182 47

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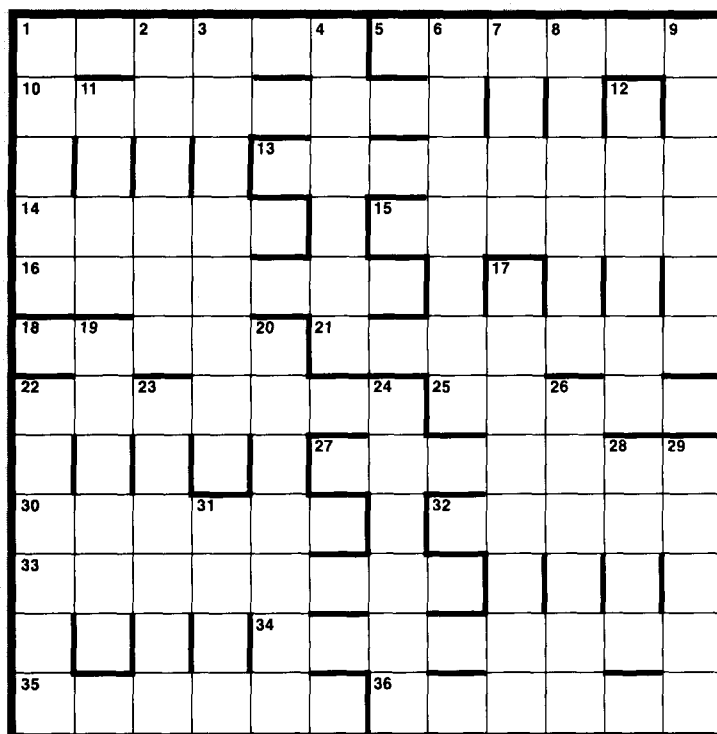
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BY EMILY COX AND HENRY RATHVON

GO-BETWEENS

Each Across clue in this puzzle provides the definitions for two different words or phrases of the same length. (Enumerations for two-word phrases or hyphenated words will show only the total number of letters.) These two clue answers in each case differ by only two letters. A third word, or go-between, which differs from each of the two clue answers by a *single* letter, is to be entered in the diagram. For example, the Across clue "Purchased chewy candy (6)" would yield the answers BOUGHT and NOUGAT; the go-between word NOUGHT would be entered in the diagram. Down clues are normal. Across clue answers include four proper nouns. Diagram entries include four proper nouns.

The answers to last month's Puzzler appear on page 108.



ACROSS

1. Go-between hymn (6)
5. Blues guitarist with skimpy swimwear (6)
10. Army food hands (8)
13. Horse on the run and pig in the mud? (8)
14. Banish happy expression (5)
15. Most recent kind of leather (6)
16. Brought out of a swoon with hot spices (7)
18. Curse talk (5)
21. Meals for horses and L.A. ballplayers (7)
22. Traps wasps (7)
25. Planted in a block (5)
27. Something whittled getting bent out of shape (7)

30. Venomous prayer (6)
32. Different voice (5)
33. Watercourse made a 180° turn (8)
34. Leave a steed with a nobleman (8)
35. Most positive woodland (6)
36. Kids' feelings (6)

DOWN

1. High-rise hauler? (5)
2. In case of Latin dancer's opening, *Evita* returned (6)
3. Back half of hospital is filled with one ethnic group (8)
4. Left out, agitated Mondale complained (6)
6. Archipelago is large and small (7)
7. Ravel is anything but listenable (4)

8. Limped exhaustedly around block (6)
9. Rights wrong sizes (6)
11. Mentioned travel to world capital (4)
12. Peg covers rip in a stocking up for job security (6)
17. Bother to point out acceptance (8)
19. Doctor rode up and fell down (6)
20. Warren Beatty movie about uphill fight uses different language (7)
22. Surprisingly spruce country (6)
23. Thief in endless, drunk reverie (6)
24. Most secure South American celebration (6)
26. Acid tester fired total up (6)
28. None changed bright sign (4)
29. Rising at last, whip up hot cereal (5)
31. Very dry in Chinese region (4)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 8 Arlington Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

Just a word about the price of The Glenlivet. Preposterous.

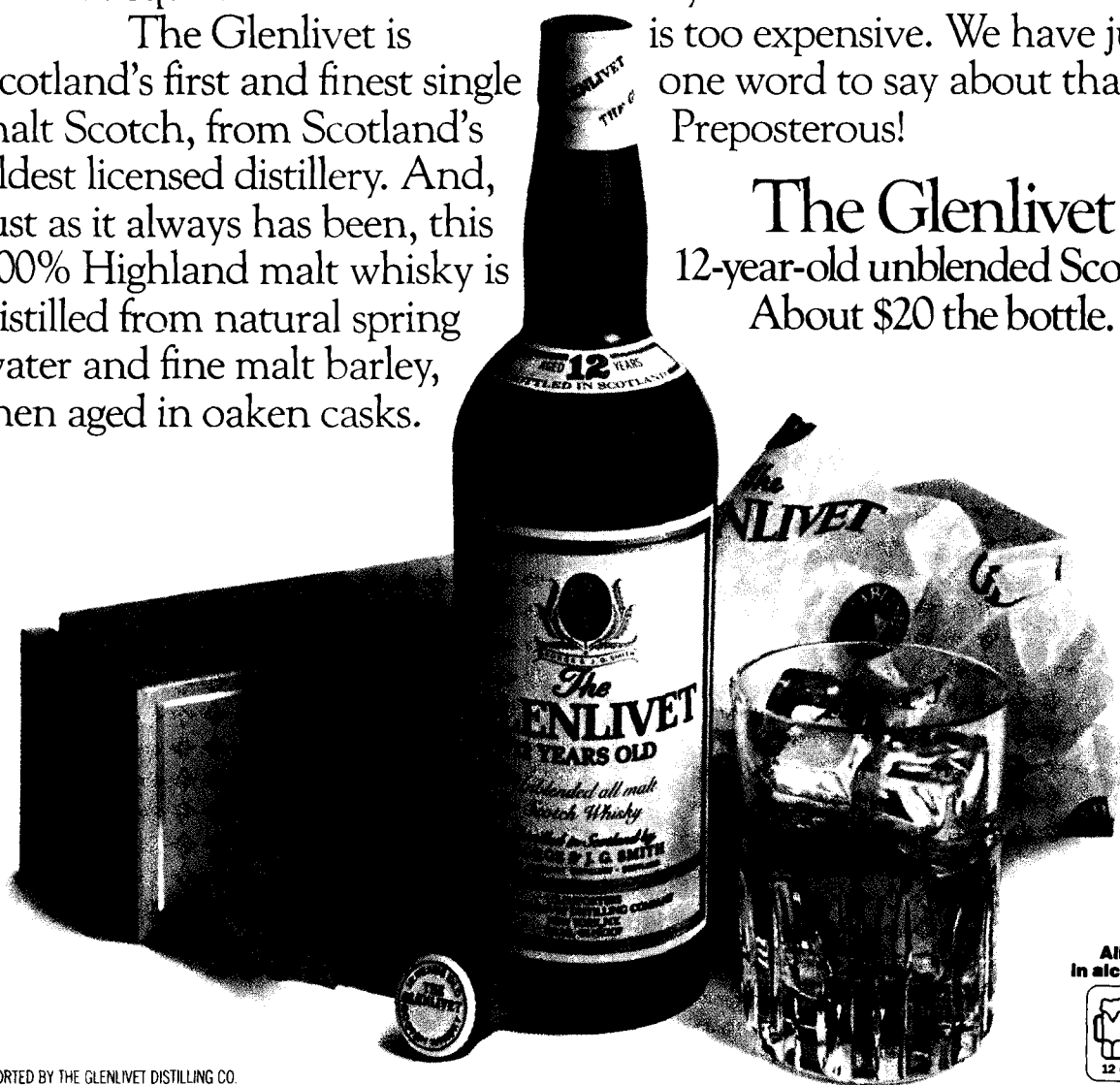
Is the premium we place on The Glenlivet really so outlandish? No more so than the premium placed on great vintage wines and fine champagne cognacs. The reason? Taste. Just one sip and you'll know that The Glenlivet has a taste that's without equal.

The Glenlivet is Scotland's first and finest single malt Scotch, from Scotland's oldest licensed distillery. And, just as it always has been, this 100% Highland malt whisky is distilled from natural spring water and fine malt barley, then aged in oaken casks.

Only The Glenlivet's time-honored methods can achieve this unequaled taste. A taste that sets us apart. Its smoothness, body and bouquet are qualities found only in this unique Scotch.

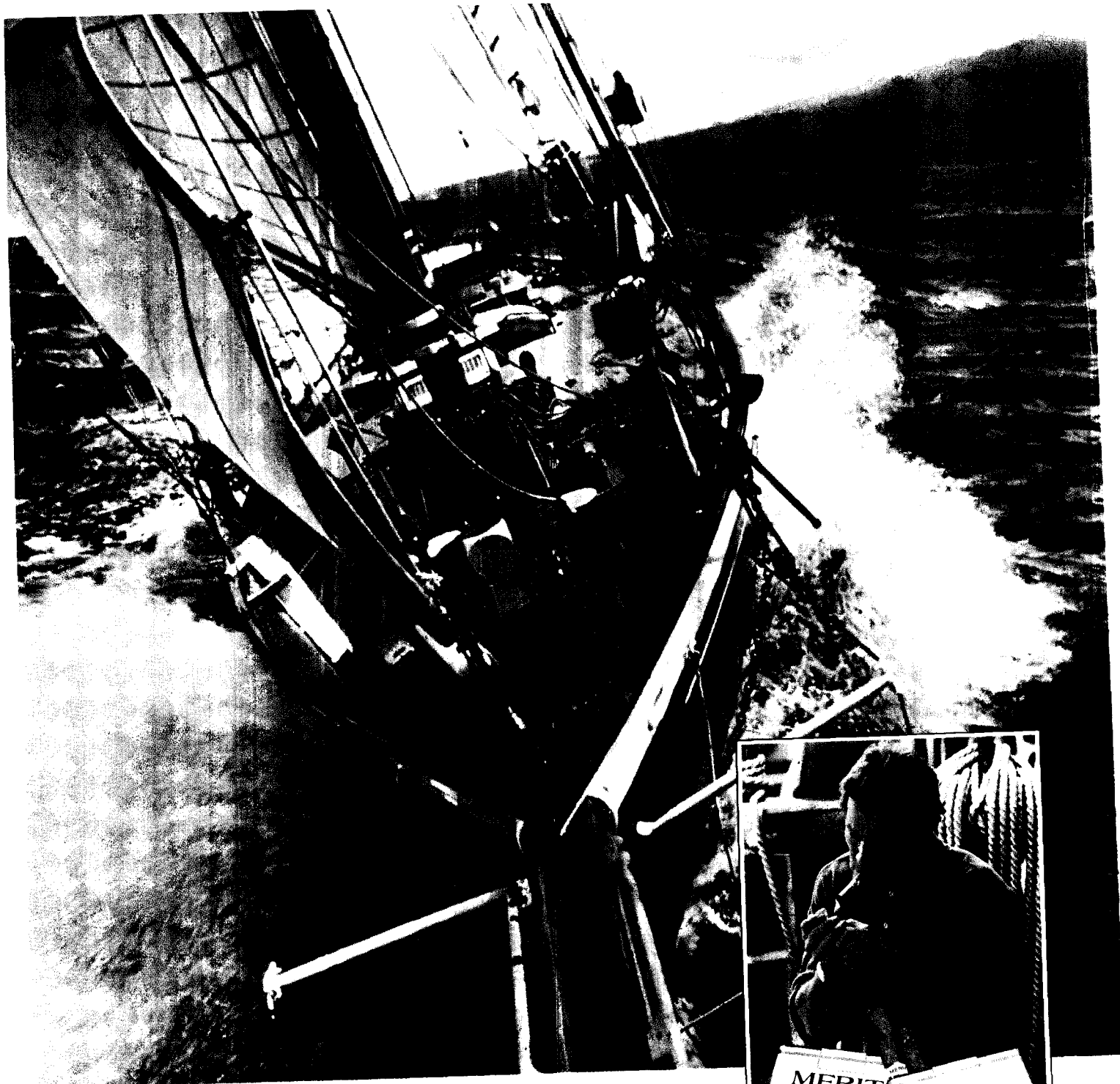
Of course, some people may still insist that The Glenlivet is too expensive. We have just one word to say about that. Preposterous!

The Glenlivet
12-year-old unblended Scotch.
About \$20 the bottle.



All are equal
in alcohol content.





MERIT

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in an ultra light.

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